Paternalism and Identity:
The Role of Personal Labour Organization in the Formation of Group Identity Among the Métis in the Rupertsland Fur Trade and the Aboriginal People in the Northern Australian Cattle Industry

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Native Studies
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

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Fall 1999

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Thesis Abstract

The question of the origins of a Métis identity in Canada is one that has been contemplated by several scholars. These scholars have taken various approaches to the question, many focusing solely on the social and political aspects of Métis history. While such approaches can be useful, they ignore the crucial influence of the economic and labour relations of the Rupertsland fur trade in the development and expression of a distinct Métis identity in western Canada. The unique economic and labour relations of the Rupertsland fur trade, identified by H. Clare Pentland as personal labour relationships, allowed a cohesiveness and inter-connectedness to develop between the Aboriginal labourers and their European employers which emphasized the interdependencies inherent in the industry. However, while personal labour relations were an important catalyst for the development and expression of a distinct Métis identity, it is too simplistic to suggest that it was these relations alone that encouraged such a phenomenon. The northern Australian cattle industry utilized similar economic and labour relations and yet a distinct mixed descent identity did not develop in Australia. Therefore, the external influences in the industry must also be examined. The four most important external influences that encouraged the development of a Métis identity in Canada and discouraged a similar event in Australia were: the needs of the colonial employers in regards to land tenure; the economic opportunities available to the people of mixed descent; the educational opportunities available to the people of mixed descent; and, the time depth of contact in both industries. These four external influences combined with the use of personal labour organization in the Rupertsland fur trade encouraged the development and expression of a distinct Métis identity in Canada.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor, Frank Tough, and my advisory committee, Jim Waldram and Ron Laliberte, for their insightful input and guidance. This thesis would not have been possible without their generous support. I would also like to thank the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan for awarding me a Messer Fund Scholarship which enabled me to conduct research at the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I would like to thank the staff at the HBCA who helped me locate the necessary materials for my research quickly and efficiently. Finally, I would like to thank my family and my friends for their support and encouragement.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter One: Introduction

The Canadian Constitution recognizes Aboriginal people in Canada as including the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples. A mixed descent population, such as the Métis, is not unique to Canada. In almost every instance where a colonizing population came into prolonged contact with an Indigenous population, a mixed descent population eventually formed. However, most often these people were absorbed either into the Indigenous society or the colonizing society. It was only in a few instances that the mixed descent population formed a unique identity, at least partially separate from both the Indigenous and colonizing identities. While various governments have, from time to time, passed protective and restrictive legislation concerning people of mixed descent, it is also rare for the dominant society to accept a mixed descent population as a separate and identifiable entity. The Métis people of Canada are one of those rare groups who have not only developed and expressed a unique identity, but who are also recognized by the dominant society as being distinct from other Aboriginal peoples. The question remains, then, why did the Métis people of Canada develop and express a unique identity, while other mixed descent populations did not?

This question is complex and has been tackled previously by other scholars.[1] However, many of these scholars approach the development of a distinct Métis identity from a social or political perspective. Even when they examine the economic roles of the Métis people in the fur trade, they seem to ignore some of the fundamental concepts of economic theory. While a social and political perspective is useful for examining group identity, some critical details are missed when an economic perspective is

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[1] See for example, Olive P. Dickason, "From 'One Nation' in the Northeast to 'New Nation' in the Northwest: A Look at the Emergence of the Métis," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, ed. William Oandasan Vol. 6, No. 2 (1982); Jacqueline Peterson, "Ethnogenesis: Settlement and Growth of a 'New People,'" *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, ed. William Oandasan Vol. 6, No. 2 (1982); and, Jacqueline Peterson, "Many roads to Red River: Métis genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1815," in *The New Peoples: being and becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985).

ignored. Many scholars recognize that a people's identity is often linked to "historical experience, values, way of life, and social patterns."[2] These aspects of society are, as Marx argued, directly influenced by the mode of production that exists in that society.[3] In other words, the government, the legal system, the religious institutions, and the societal norms and values are influenced by the manner in which a society achieves its physical survival. As such, the economic experiences and relationships in any given society have an important influence on the identity of that society. Therefore, it is important to examine the development and expression of a Métis identity in Canada from an economic perspective.[4]

While there are members of the Métis Nation in all the provinces and territories of Canada, it was in Red River that a Métis identity was first expressed in a cohesive manner. As such, it is important to understand the society in Red River and Rupertsland in which this identity developed.[5] The economic system that fueled this society, at least prior to 1870, was the fur trade and, therefore, an examination of a Métis identity must begin with an examination of the economic and labour relations in the Rupertsland fur

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[2] James J. Teevan, ed., *Introduction to Sociology: A Canadian Focus*, 3rd ed. (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1989), 187.

[3] E. K. Hunt and Howard J. Sherman, *Economics: An Introduction of Traditional and Radical Views*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978), 60.

[4] An economic perspective has been assumed by at least one scholar who has considered the creation of the Métis people in Canada, Ron Bourgeault. However, as will be discussed in detail later, the application of classic Marxist analysis to Métis ethnogenesis does not take into account the unique economic conditions present in Rupertsland. See, for example, Ron Bourgeault, "The Struggle for Class and Nation: The Origin of the Métis in Canada and the National Question," in *1492-1992: Five Centuries of Imperialism and Resistance*, ed. Ron Bourgeault, et al. (Winnipeg: Society for Socialist Studies/Fernwood Publishing, 1992); Ron Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Métis and the Fur Trade: Class, Sexism and Racism in the Transition from 'Communism' to Capitalism," *Studies in Political Economy* 12 (1983); and, Ron Bourgeault, "Race, Class and Gender: Colonial Domination of Indian Women," *Socialist Studies: A Canadian Annual*, No. 5 (1989).

[5] Rupertsland was the territory granted to the Hudson's Bay Company under its royal charter of 1670. In this document, Rupertsland included "all those seas, straits, bays, rivers, lakes, creeks and sounds, in whatsoever latitude they shall be, that lie within the entrance of the straits, commonly called Hudson's Straits, together with all the lands, countries and territories upon the coasts and confines of the seas, straits, bays, lakes, rivers, creeks and sounds aforesaid, which are not now actually possessed by any of our subjects, or by the subjects of any other Christian Prince or State ..." This territory came to include parts of northwestern Ontario, Quebec, the prairie provinces and the Mackenzie basin. "The Royal Charter Incorporating the Hudson's Bay Company, 2 May, 1670," http://schoolnet.carleton.ca/cdisk/canadiskText Base/CanaDocs/British/1670HBCCharter.html

trade. However, it is too simplistic to suggest that it was the economic and labour relations in the fur trade alone that allowed for the development and expression of a Métis identity. The cattle industry in northern Australia utilized similar economic and labour relationships and yet the mixed descent population here did not develop and express a unique identity. Clearly, there were other external influences that either encouraged or prohibited the expression of a unique identity.

The northern Australian cattle industry provides a useful comparison to the Rupertsland fur trade for several reasons. First, both Australia and Canada were colonized by Britain. As such, the economic elite who were involved in either the cattle industry or the fur trade had similar societal values and beliefs that influenced their actions in these colonies. Second, both the Rupertsland fur trade and the northern Australian cattle industry were valuable industries to the colonial economies. Finally, both industries made extensive use of Aboriginal labour. The interaction of Aboriginal and European peoples in both instances led to the creation of a significant mixed descent population. Therefore, there was a potential for a unique identity to be developed and expressed in both industries, although it was only in Rupertsland where this phenomenon occurred.

The Theory of Personal Labour Organization

H. Clare Pentland developed a most useful framework for my examination of the economic and labour relations in both the Rupertsland fur trade and the northern Australian cattle industry. Pentland argued that when faced with certain economic conditions, employers will, at times, adopt personal labour organization as the most viable means of organizing their work forces. Personal labour organization is an employment scheme in which the employer accepts the social overhead costs of his employees and is generally maintained through a system of paternalistic control. The economic conditions experienced by both the fur traders in Rupertsland and the

pastoralists in northern Australia were those conditions recognized by Pentland as necessary for the development of personal labour organization. The hierarchical and paternal relationships that developed under personal labour organization were an important catalyst in the formation of a distinct Métis identity in Rupertsland. However, it was not the economic system alone that fostered a Métis identity as a similar identity was not expressed among the mixed descent people of northern Australia. As such, the external influences that impacted on these two industries must also be examined.

The Rupertsland Fur Trade

Canada's economic history has been dominated by the exportation of raw materials and the importation of manufactured goods. At least initially, Britain was both the recipient of the raw materials exported by Canada and the producer of the manufactured goods imported by Canada. As Innis explained:

> The raw material supplied to the mother country stimulated manufactures of the finished product and also of the products which were in demand in the colony. Large-scale production of raw materials was encouraged by improvement of technique of production, of marketing, and of transport as well as by improvement in the manufacture of the finished product. As a consequence, energy in the colony was drawn into the production of the staple commodity both directly and indirectly. Population was involved directly in the production of the staple and indirectly in the production of facilities promoting production. Agriculture, industry, transportation, trade, finance, and governmental activities tend to become subordinate to the production of the staple for a more highly specialized manufacturing community ... Canada remained British in spite of free trade and chiefly because she continued as an exporter of staples to a progressively industrialized mother country.[6]

This exchange of products allowed Britain to grow through its period of

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[6] Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, revised ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), 385.

industrialization during the nineteenth century.

The fur trade was one of the first successful export industries in Canada. It was initiated in almost every region in Canada, including the Atlantic coast, the Great Lakes region and the west coast. However, it was only in Rupertsland that the fur trade developed as a large-scale economic activity. Two main fur trading companies, the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, established and maintained a profitable trade until their merger in 1821, after which the HBC continued the trade. Although the Aboriginal people did not always react in predictable manners according to the HBC men, they were motivated economically. The Aboriginal trappers demanded fair prices and high quality merchandise. Convenience was also a concern of the trappers. As Ray explained, "The Indians also responded to opportunities which permitted them to reduce *costs* of trading, as when they opted to pay somewhat higher prices for goods from *coureurs de bois* in the hinterland rather than face the cost in time, effort and physical risk entailed in covering the longer distances down to the bay."[7] These European and Aboriginal motivations make it clear that the Rupertsland fur trade was an economic system and, therefore, the economic and labour relations that developed in the trade must be understood from this perspective.

The economic conditions faced by the fur traders in Rupertsland were those conditions recognized by Pentland as necessary for the development of personal labour organization. As such, these traders developed personal labour organization to initiate and sustain a profitable trade. As a result of establishing personal labour organization, the trading companies encompassed a rigid employment hierarchy that kept Aboriginal peoples at the lowest level of employment. This employment hierarchy was maintained by paternalistic management techniques. The most influential and successful traders

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[7] Arthur J. Ray and Donald Freeman, *'Give Us Good Measure:' An Economic Analysis of Relations Between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company before 1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 239-40.

were those men who accepted the paternal care of the Aboriginal peoples involved in the trade and who demonstrated superior intelligence, energy and fairness.[8]

The Rupertsland fur trade was not the only industry that faced the economic conditions outlined by Pentland. Additionally, the fur trade was not the only industry that introduced personal labour organization to its operations. The cattle industry in northern Australia also faced similar economic conditions and introduced personal labour organization as the most viable means for maintaining a profitable industry.

The Northern Australian Cattle Industry

In 1787, Britain established its first settlement in Australia at Botany Bay (now Sydney). While the southern portion of the continent was settled over the next few decades, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that Anglo-Australians began settling the vast northern regions. The rapid advance of Anglo-Australian squatters and their livestock created much tension and apprehension for all concerned.[9] One of the most serious areas of conflict concerned the destruction of the environment, including the disastrous effects of the introduction of hoofed animals on the water supply and the natural flora and fauna, which had serious impacts on the Aboriginal hunting and gathering patterns and, hence, lifestyle.[10] These changes were devastating both in their scope and in the short amount of time required for the change to happen, often in less than one generation.[11] It was not surprising that the Aboriginal peoples resisted the

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[8] Carol M. Judd, "Native labour and social stratification in the Hudson's Bay Company's Northern Department, 1770-1870," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* Vol. 17, No. 4 (1980), 305-6.
[9] Dawn May, *Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry: Queensland from White Settlement to the Present* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1994), 25.
[10] L.A. Riddett, *Kine, Kin and Country: The Victoria River District of the Northern Territory 1911-1966* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1990), 66.
[11] C.D. Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines: Aboriginal Policy and Practice -- Volume III* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971), 3.

destruction of their land and their way of life, making deliberate and well planned attacks on the settlers.[12]

The Anglo-Australians retaliated with similar violence and persistence. Aboriginal people were shot on sight and some settlers even went on "hunts" looking for Aboriginal camps.[13] In a more organized effort, Queensland established the Native Mounted Police. The Native Police force was composed of Aboriginal troopers and European officers. Officially, their role was to protect the Anglo-Australian settlers from the Aboriginal resisters. This police force, however, became infamous for its role in the massacres of Aboriginal communities. The Anglo-Australian attitudes that justified frontier violence and distorted the image of Aboriginal people were one of the main reasons that discouraged managers on remote northern stations from employing Aboriginal labourers until the late nineteenth century. Eventually, however, the northern pastoralists were forced to turn to Aboriginal labourers, as the number of reliable Anglo-Australian labourers available for work diminished.

The economic conditions faced by these remote northern pastoralists were those conditions recognized by Pentland as necessary for the development of personal labour organization. In response to these economic conditions, the northern pastoralists instituted personal labour organization in order to maintain profitable operations. The pastoralists introduced a rigid employment hierarchy that kept the Aboriginal labourers at the lowest levels of employment.[14] This hierarchy was maintained by paternalistic management techniques. The most successful station managers secured loyal service from their Aboriginal employees by accepting the paternal responsibilities and demonstrating superior intelligence, energy and fairness.[15]

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[12] Ann McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle': Aborigines in Cattle Country* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 16; and, C.D. Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines: Aboriginal Policy and Practice -- Volume III* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971), 76,78.

[13] J. W. Bleakley, *The Aborigines of Australia: Their History -- Their Habits -- Their Assimilation* (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1961), 72; and, Bill Rosser, *Up Rode the Troopers: The Black Police in Queensland* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990), 1, 54, 78, 79.

[14] Riddett, *Kine, Kin and Country*, 95.

[15] Rosser, *Up Rode the Troopers*, 118; and, Frank Stevens, *Aborigines in the Northern Territory Cattle Industry* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), 112.

The economic and labour conditions faced by the Rupertsland fur traders and the northern Australian pastoralists were similar. Additionally, both the traders and the pastoralists used personal labour organization to maintain profitable operations. The personal relations that developed under this system allowed for the development of inter-racial relationships. Even more importantly, the personal relations emphasized the interdependencies inherent in both industries. Eventually, a mixed descent population developed in both Rupertsland and northern Australia. However, it was only in Rupertsland that this population developed and expressed a unique identity, distinct from both the Aboriginal and European identities. Therefore, even though the economic and labour relations of the fur trade were important catalysts in the expression of a Métis identity, it is too simplistic to suggest that it was the fur trade alone that facilitated the expression of this identity. Clearly, there were additional external influences that must also be considered.

External Influences in the Fur Trade and the Cattle Industry

Although several external influences affected the fur trade and the cattle industry, four main influences impacted the mixed descent populations the most. Perhaps the most important influence was the need of the fur traders and the pastoralists in regards to land tenure. The fur traders, operating under the ideals of mercantilism, were involved in the exchange of commodities. As such, they were not concerned with establishing direct control of the means of production or, in this case, the land.[16] In other words, the traders were not initially concerned with colonization and, therefore, did not view the Aboriginal peoples as impediments to their efforts. As such, their attitudes towards the Aboriginal peoples were much more accommodating than the attitudes held by the northern Australian pastoralists.

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[16] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. I, ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 271-4.

The pastoralists, influenced by the ideals of industrial capitalism, were engaged in the production of a commodity. As such, they needed to establish undeniable control of the means of production.[17] In other words, the pastoralists needed to colonize the land as efficiently as possible. Unlike in the fur trade, the Aboriginal peoples in northern Australia became an impediment to the pastoralists' goal of colonization. As a result, the pastoralists developed an opinion that the Aboriginal peoples were intrinsically inferior to the Anglo-Australians. This attitude of the pastoralists led to two other external influences that affected the mixed descent population: the opportunities available to these people in the cattle industry and the education that these people received. Finally, the different time depths of contact in Rupertsland and northern Australia influenced the development of group identity within the Aboriginal and mixed descent populations in these regions.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis uses the theory of personal labour organization to illustrate the economic conditions and the state relations necessary for the development and expression of a distinct mixed descent identity. I begin with a discussion of Karl Marx's theory concerning the mode of production in society and Immanuel Wallerstein's theory of world systems in order to provide necessary background to the theory of personal labour organization. Following this theoretical discussion, I provide a comprehensive analysis of the economic and labour relations in both the Rupertsland fur trade and the northern Australian cattle industry to establish the reliance on personal labour organization in these industries and its impact on the Aboriginal populations. Finally, I detail the historical experiences of the mixed descent peoples in Rupertsland and northern Australia, focusing on the differences in experience which encouraged the

[17] Marx, *Capital*, 271-4.

development of a distinct Métis identity in Rupertsland but hindered such a phenomenon in northern Australia. By the end of this thesis it will be clear that the economic system which dictated the interaction between Aboriginal and European peoples in Rupertsland and northern Australia had a profound impact on the subsequent Aboriginal – European relations and on the development of group identity in both countries.

Conclusion

The development and expression of a distinct Métis identity is a complex issue. The fur trade economy, as other scholars have suggested, was an important catalyst for the creation of this group of people. The personal relations that developed under personal labour organization in the fur trade fostered the development of inter-racial relationships and emphasized the interdependencies inherent in the trade. The economic and labour relations in the northern Australian cattle industry were similar to those relations in the Rupertsland fur trade, and yet the mixed descent population of northern Australia did not develop a distinct identity. Therefore, while it is crucial to examine the economic and labour relations in the Rupertsland fur trade, in order to clearly understand the development and expression of a distinct Métis identity in Canada one must also consider the external influences that affected the people of mixed descent.

There were four inter-related influences that had the most profound impact on the mixed descent populations of both Rupertsland and northern Australia. The first, and perhaps the most pervasive, external influence was the need of the fur traders and the northern pastoralists in regards to land tenure and, in turn, their attitudes towards the Aboriginal peoples with whom they interacted. Second, the employment opportunities and, as such, the ability or inability of some members of the mixed descent population to accumulate capital, prestige and status influenced these peoples' self-identity as either part of the Aboriginal community or as distinct from it. Third, the opportunities for the

Aboriginal peoples to receive a formal education also influenced their understanding of the European economic systems and their roles in these systems. Finally, the time depth of contact influenced the experiences of the mixed descent populations in both industries. As such, while personal labour organization facilitated the potential for a unique mixed descent identity to develop, it was these four inter-related external influences that eventually prohibited or encouraged the development and expression of a distinct mixed descent identity.

Chapter Two: The Theory of Personal Labour Organization

A distinct mixed descent, or Métis, identity in Canada was created at least partly through the economic and labour relations established in the fur trade between the European colonizers and the Indigenous inhabitants of the land. However, it was not these economic relations alone that influenced the creation of such an identity as similar economic relations established in northern Australia's cattle industry did not encourage the development a mixed descent identity. Therefore, it is not only important to understand the economic and labour relations established by these industries but also the variant external influences that affected the fur trade and the cattle industry in order to understand the development and expression of a distinct mixed descent identity, or its absence.

In order to clearly understand these economic and labour relations, and the external influences that affected them, the labour market conditions faced by both industries, and the European and Aboriginal responses to them, must be examined. Labour market conditions are complex and include such variables as economic stability, demography, geography, skill levels and the social characteristics of the work force. These conditions, and, thus, the economic and labour relations that they influence, are not static. They are constantly adapting to changes, both intentional and unplanned, in the economic environment.[1] Therefore, it is crucial to examine these changing economic and labour relationships, in their historical context, over time.

H. Clare Pentland, a Canadian economic theorist, has provided the most useful and clear framework through which to understand the labour market conditions encountered by both the fur trade and the cattle industry. His framework also explained how these labour market conditions encouraged the creation of a particular form of

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[1] Paul Phillips, introduction to *Labour and Capital in Canada, 1650-1860*, by H. Clare Pentland (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, Publishers, 1981), xiv.

labour organization which he called *personal labour organization.* Although Pentland did not apply his theory directly to Aboriginal — European labour relations in the fur trade or the cattle industry, the economic conditions faced by the participants in both these industries influenced them to accept personal labour organization as the most viable method of organization to allow for the successful operation of the industries. The economic, labour and, later, race relations established by personal labour organization allowed for the *potential* creation of a distinct class of mixed descent people in these industries. Therefore, the unique historical circumstances experienced by the participants of both the fur trade and the cattle industry either fostered or inhibited the development of a distinct mixed descent class. As such, it was only in Canada's Northwest, and not Australia or even other regions in Canada, where the mixed descent population experienced the necessary conditions that allowed them to develop and express a distinct identity.

Pentland's theory of personal labour organization is based largely on a Marxist perspective of capitalism. In order to clearly comprehend this theory then, an understanding of capitalism as a mode of production and an understanding of the ideals of mercantile and industrial capitalism is needed. Additionally, it is important to consider capitalism as it exists on an international level. These ideas form the basis of Pentland's theory and provide the theoretical background of this thesis.

Capitalist Labour Markets

Pentland defined a capitalist market as "one in which the actions of workers and employers are governed and linked by impersonal considerations of immediate pecuniary advantage."[2] In order for this situation to arise, however, certain conditions must exist. The most important condition is the existence of a constant labour reserve

[2] H. Clare Pentland, "The Development of a Capitalistic Labour Market in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* Vol. 25, No. 4 (1959), 450.

from which employers can draw upon when and where they need labourers. Employers must also be secure in the knowledge that they can terminate and later re-establish labour contracts whenever it is expedient to do so without risk to their production process.[3]

A capitalistic labour reserve must consist of a group of people without access to or control of the means of production and who are willing to sell their labour power as a commodity to the small minority of people who do control the means of production.[4] Karl Marx further defined how labour power becomes a commodity. He explained that,

> labour-power can appear on the market as a commodity only if, and in so far as, its possessor, the individual whose labour-power it is, offers it for sale or sells it as a commodity. In order that its possessor may sell it as a commodity, he must have it at his disposal, he must be the free proprietor of his own labour-capacity, hence of his person ... He must constantly treat his labour-power as his own property, his own commodity, and he can do this only by placing it at the disposal of the buyer, i.e. handing it over to the buyer for him to consume, for a definite period of time, temporarily.[5]

In other words, the labourer must be free to decide to whom and for how long he or she sells his or her labour power. This is not to deny that the labourer is influenced, or even coerced at times, by factors such as the presence or absence of a purchaser of the labour power, the quantity of labour power needed to be sold in order to achieve subsistence, or regulations imposed by the state. However, it is essential that the labourer continually sell his or her labour-power for limited periods of time, for, as Marx explained, "if he were to sell it in a lump, once and for all, he would be selling himself, converting himself from a free man into a slave, from an owner of a commodity into a commodity."[6]

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[3] Pentland, "Capitalistic Labour Market," 455-6.
[4] Robert Miles, *Capitalism and Unfree Labour: Anomaly or necessity?* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1987), 20.
[5] Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. Lawrence H. Simon (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 265.
[6] Marx, *Selected Writings*, 265.

As long as the labourer remains in possession of his labour power, and uses it as a commodity, relations between labourers and employers remain impersonal because the employers are not directly responsible for the physical well-being of their employees.[7] A wage is paid to the employee so that he or she can then provide for his or her physical survival. The responsibility to do so, however, remains with the employee, not the employer. When a labourer sells his or her labour power in one lump sum, on the other hand, and becomes the virtual possession of the owner/employer, the responsibility for the physical well-being of the labourer lies directly with the owner/employer as a wage (or at least a sufficient wage) is no longer paid and the labourer no longer has the direct means to provide for his or her own physical survival. Once the employer becomes directly responsible for the physical well-being of his or her employees, personal labour relations will begin to develop in some form and on some level.[8]

Generally, it is presumed that the existence of a free labour market presupposes a specific form of capitalism, that is industrial capitalism. Marx, however, identified another form of capitalism that was not dependent upon the existence of a free labour market, and that is merchant's capitalism or mercantilism. Robert Miles described mercantilism as "the simple circulation of commodities and money, and its role as being to promote the exchange of commodities."[9] Mercantilists emphasized immediacy in profits, market prices and discrete transactions and, therefore, concerned themselves mainly with finished, saleable products. They used the availability of personal capital as their bargaining tools. As Pentland explained, for the mercantilist "it was his possession of capital, together with other people's lack of it, that allowed him to seize differential advantages in trade ... The more of it the merchant had, and the more expeditiously he could change it into goods and back into (more) money, the more profit he could

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[7] Achieving physical well-being can include more than mere sustenance. It can also include aspects of achieving emotional and spiritual balance.
[8] Pentland, "Capitalistic Labour Market," 450.
[9] Miles, *Capitalism and Unfree Labour*, 38.

make."[10] As such, the mercantilists were concerned with immediate profits and liquid capital, not fixed capital investments that would allow for yet to be determined gains some time in the future. This concern often translated into two characteristics for mercantilist business ventures. First, they were largely unwilling to make substantial investments in fixed capital, something which is necessary for the existence of manufacturing and industrial capitalism. Second, when the mercantilists began operating in the colonies, they often maintained loyalties with their homeland where a relatively secure market for commodities was already established.[11]

Industrial capitalism, on the other hand, focused less on the exchange of commodities and more on the production of commodities which could subsequently be sold to those who did not have access to the means of production themselves (i.e. the labourers in the labour reserve). Within industrial capitalism, then, labour reserves are important for two reasons. First, they provide a constant flow of labour power which is used to achieve the production of commodities. Second, they provide a local consumer market for the commodities that are being produced. Labour reserves are not the most important concern of mercantilists as their major focus is not the production of commodities, but instead their exchange. Furthermore, with less investment in fixed capital, mercantilists are not as reliant on local markets for they can, instead, invest in transportation costs to overseas markets. These differences in mercantilist and industrial perspectives towards capital can also be observed in their differing concern towards control of the means of production.[12]

Mercantilists, being as they are concerned with the exchange of commodities, believe that it is of little consequence whether the person or group that they are exchanging with has control of a means of production or not. In other words, everyone involved in the exchange can have access to a means of production; it is of little concern

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[10] H. Clare Pentland, *Labour and Capital in Canada, 1650-1860*, ed. Paul Phillips (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1981), 149.
[11] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 149-50.
[12] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. I, ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 781-5.

to the mercantilists. However, once the focus turns to the *production* of commodities, not just their exchange, the industrial capitalist must have sole control of the means of production. As Marx explained,

> without a *class dependent on wages*, the moment individuals confront each other as free persons, there can be no production of surplus-value; without the production of surplus-value there can be no capitalist production, and hence no capital and no capitalist! Capital and wage-labour (it is thus we designate the labour of the worker who sells his own labour-power) only express two aspects of the self-same relationship ... Wage-labour is then a necessary condition for the formation of capital and remains the essential prerequisite of capitalist production.[13]

In other words, wage labour is a crucial element of industrial capitalism and wage labour will only exist in an environment where the majority are denied access to a means of production.

To summarize, one of the most important differences between mercantilism and industrial capitalism is the structure of the labour market generally and the commodification of labour specifically. Under a mercantilist system, labour does *not* have to be treated as a commodity because the emphasis is on exchange and circulation. Surplus value is gained by buying at low prices and selling at high ones. Under an industrial capitalist system, however, with an emphasis on production of commodities, surplus value is gained through the direct exploitation of labour power. In other words, an industrial capitalist will create capital if he can appropriate more labour and exchange-value in the production process than it costs him to sustain the labourer. In order for labour power to be exploited, it has to exist on the market as a commodity.[14]

If labour power is to exist as a commodity, two conditions must be met. First, the labourer must be willing to offer it for sale as a commodity. This can be achieved only if the labourer is "free;" he or she must be in a position to dispose of his or her labour power as he or she chooses. As well, the labourer must remain in possession of

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[13] Marx, *Capital*, 1005-6.
[14] Marx, *Capital*, 270.

his or her labour power by selling it for specific periods of time only, not in one lump sum. The second condition for labour power to exist as a commodity is that the *only* commodity that can be possessed by the labourer is his or her labour power. In other words, the labourer must be denied access to the means of production. As such, to ensure the continuous production of commodities, the industrial capitalist must have access to a reserve pool of labourers from which he or she can continually purchase labour power as it is needed.[15]

These variant attitudes towards, and perceptions of needs for, investment and capital in mercantilism and industrial capitalism had considerable influence on the characteristics of the relations of production in the fur trade and the cattle industry.[16]

Relations of Production within Capitalism

Mercantile and industrial capitalism are examples of modes of production. Marx described the mode of production as a society's economic base and as the major influence in determining the structure and nature of the other institutions in a society (for example, the government, the legal system and religious institutions). The mode of production can be broken down into two elements. The first is the means of production, which is the technology and knowledge utilized in production. The second is the relations of production, which are the social relationships developed between the people involved in production and the means of production.[17] An important aspect of the creation of a distinct Métis identity can be discovered by examining the relations of

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[15] Marx, *Capital*, 271-4.

[16] For a discussion of the mode of production and how it relates to cultural ecology in the fur trade, see Michael Asch, "The Dene Economy," in *Dene Nation: the colony within*, ed. Mel Watkins (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 47-61; and, Michael Asch, "The Ecological-Evolutionary Model and the Concept of Mode of Production," in *Challenging Anthropology*, eds. D. Turner and G. Smith (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson), 81-99.

[17] E. K. Hunt and Howard J. Sherman, *Economics: An Introduction of Traditional and Radical Views*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978), 60.

production in the fur trade. As well, the absence of a distinct mixed descent identity in Australia can be understood by examining the relations of production in the cattle industry.

Generally, relations of production can be divided into two broad categories — free labour relations and unfree labour relations. Free labourers produce for themselves and their dependents exactly what they need in order to survive and, in so doing, establish impersonal labour relations. The relations are impersonal because all parties remain essentially in control of some type of commodity, be it a manufactured product, raw material or labour power.[18] Moreover, relations remain impersonal as long as free labourers maintain control of their labour power as a commodity and provide for themselves their means of subsistence. As has already been discussed, free labour relations can exist when the labourer is "free" to sell his or her labour power as a commodity. In reality, wage labour is a form of exploitation because the labourer is not the one who controls the surplus value. According to Marx, the surplus value is the difference between the cost of the initial investment for production (which can include the purchase of raw materials, the purchase of any necessary machinery or tools, and wages for the required labourers) and the price at which the manufactured commodities can subsequently be sold.[19] Since the employer controls the means of production, the employer effectively owns the commodities which are produced. Therefore, the employer also controls the surplus-value created in the production process.[20] However, wage labour is still free because the labour power is a private possession belonging to the labourer. While subject to several external influences, the wage labourer is theoretically free to sell his or her labour power to whomever he or she wishes.

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[18] Marx, *Capital*, 271.

[19] Marx, *Capital*, 251, 262.

[20] The employer further exploits the labourer as the labourer is not paid until *after* the production process is complete. As Marx explained, "the worker is not paid until after he has expended his labour-power, and realized both the value of his labour-power and a certain quantity of surplus-value in the shape of commodities. He has therefore produced not only surplus-value, which we for the present regard as a fund to meet the private consumption of the capitalist, but also the variable capital, the fund out of which he himself is paid, before it flows back to him in the shape of wages; and his employment lasts only as long as he continues to reproduce this fund." Marx, *Capital*, 712.

Additionally, the wage labourer is theoretically free to spend his or her wage as he or she sees fit, although this is again subject to various external influences.[21]

Unfree labour relations exist, on the other hand, where there is substantial exploitation of the labourer by those who control the means of production.[22] The labourer no longer possesses any commodity, not even his or her own labour power. In other words, there is an inherent inequality between the parties involved; not everyone is in continual possession of a commodity. Unfree labourers have their labour power sold in one lump sum, thereby becoming the commodity themselves. They are then 'owned' by the one who controls the means of production.[23] In this situation, the labour relations become personal in that the employer becomes directly involved in the continuing survival of his or her employees; the employees are dependent upon the employer as they do not have the means to produce for themselves what they need in order to survive. A system of hierarchies, status and privileges are established to maintain the labour relations. The employer wins loyalty and encourages good work habits by portraying a paternal interest in his or her employees.[24] Two well known forms of unfree labour relations are slavery and feudalism.

There are several other levels on which free and unfree labour can be contrasted. For example, free labour relations allow the labourer to possess his or her labour power and use it as a commodity. As such, a definite amount of time is involved. The free labourer sells his or her labour for a specific period of time and is expected to work for a specified number of hours each day. In unfree labour relations, the labourer, himself, is considered and used as a commodity by the owner/employer. As soon as a labourer has his or her labour power sold in one lump sum, he or she no longer has any control over it. The labour power, as a commodity, is given to a new owner. In this way, the unfree labourer has essentially become a part of the means of production; he or she has become

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[21] Miles, *Capitalism and Unfree Labour*, 24-5.
[22] Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, trans. Jack Cohen (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1964), 87.
[23] Marx, *Capital*, 271.
[24] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 25; and, Pentland, "Capitalistic Labour Market," 454.

a tool to be used by the owner whenever or however he deems necessary.[25] There is no longer a definite amount of time specified for labouring.

Furthermore, the free labourer, unlike the unfree labourer, remains an active member of the economic market as he or she retains the ability to leave or re-enter the labour reserve as he or she sees fit. The wage labourer in particular also has the ability to spend his or her wage on the market as he or she chooses. The impersonal relations surrounding the use of free labour force the wage labourer to organize his or her own subsistence, which keeps him or her active in the economic market. On the other hand, the subsistence of unfree labourers is organized for them by their owner. This can involve directly supplying the unfree labourers with the means of subsistence through rations or the like, forcing the unfree labourers to produce their own subsistence through hunting or small-scale agriculture, or a combination of the two. As such, the unfree labourer does not actively participate in the economic market other than as a tool for the use of the owner.[26]

Both free and unfree labourers experience some form of exploitation and domination within the capitalist economy. However, the way in which they perceive the exchange process is different. Referring specifically to wage and slave labour, Miles wrote, "with wage labour there is the appearance of equal exchange in so far as the worker is paid for every hour worked or every piece produced. Consequently all labour appears as paid labour. With slave labour, all labour appears as labour for the owner."[27] Marx argued that it was these perceptions that made unfree labour relations less productive and adaptable. In most instances, the owner must maintain his unfree labourers; he must ensure them a means of subsistence. Therefore, the economic motivation to provide sufficient labour power experienced by free labourers (i.e. the need to earn a wage in order to provide for their own subsistence) is not experienced by unfree labourers. This situation allows the unfree labourer to feel no economic

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[25] Miles, *Capitalism and Unfree Labour*, 27.
[26] Miles, *Capitalism and Unfree Labour*, 28.
[27] Miles, *Capitalism and Unfree Labour*, 30.

compulsion to provide labour power to the owner; the owner must find some way to compel the unfree labourer to work. Moreover, because the labour power is not a possession of the unfree labourer, there is nothing to be gained by offering or developing a special skill or talent as he or she will not benefit directly from such an action.[28]

Production is further hampered by the fact that the unfree labourer has limited means of resistance. The only simple and effective means of resistance available to unfree labourers is to sabotage the means of production. Therefore, many owners of unfree labourers are reluctant to provide them with the newest and most expensive forms of technology, in order to sustain the least amount of damage to their initial capital investments, even though the use of inferior technology slows the production process.[29]

From this discussion, then, it becomes clear that a capitalist mode of production, especially industrial capitalist, would favour the adoption of free labour relations. However, several factors can inhibit the use of free labour relations in all areas. Shortages of labour and inflated wages can become hindrances. Within a colonial situation, the widespread availability of inexpensive land can inhibit the creation of a labour reserve because the pride and satisfaction of owning one's own piece of land often outweighs the attraction of potentially higher wages working for someone else.[30] Therefore, when land is readily available, most people will work for wages only until they can save enough money to purchase their own land and in so doing gain access to a potential means of production. Indigenous resistance to colonial settlement and inclusion in the capitalist production can also severally hinder the use of free labour relations.[31] The fear of Indigenous attacks and violence will inhibit the movement of many settlers to frontier areas and will create labour shortages and increase wages dramatically in these areas. To some extent, all of these conditions were faced by the

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[28] Miles, *Capitalism and Unfree Labour*, 29.
[29] Miles, *Capitalism and Unfree Labour*, 29.
[30] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 58.
[31] Miles, *Capitalism and Unfree Labour*, 221-2.

merchants of the fur trade and the industrialists of the cattle industry. In neither situation were they able to establish free labour relations, at least initially; both industries were compelled to adopt personal labour relations.

Class Analysis

Inherent to the adoption of a capitalist mode of production is the creation of hierarchies within society. These hierarchies define who has control of the means of production, who is able to accumulate capital, and who has the most economic and political influence in that society. Generally speaking, the hierarchies define the dominant class and the subordinate class and the various sub-classes that exist within them. As the divisions between these various classes and sub-classes in society widen, as the goals and objectives of the classes and sub-classes diverge, conflicts and struggles occur between them. In order to understand these conflicts and struggles, a class analysis needs to be undertaken.

In a capitalist system, the basic relationship that exists between owners (or employers) and producers (or employees) is one of exploitation in that the surplus labour of the producers is appropriated by the owners in order to create a surplus product which is also appropriated and controlled by the owners. It is a relationship of exploitation because the producers neither control the production process nor the results of production;[32] one class in society must come to dominate all other classes.[33]

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[32] Exploitation, or the creation of surplus labour, is not unique to capitalism. It exists anywhere that a particular group or class controls the means of production. As Marx explained, "capital did not invent surplus labour. Wherever a part of society possesses the monopoly of the means of production, the worker, free or unfree, must add to the labour-time necessary for his own maintenance an extra quantity of labour-time in order to produce the means of subsistence for the owner of the means of production." Marx, *Capital*, 344.

[33] Ralph Miliband, "Class Analysis," in *Social Theory Today*, ed. Anthony Giddens and Jonathan Turner (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 327-8.

In order for a class to achieve domination, it must effectively control the three main sources of power and influence in a capitalist society: the means of production, administration of the state, and the major sources of communication and consent.[34] These three sources of domination are inter-related and work together as one structure. As Ralph Miliband explained:

> each of these three forms a part of one structure of domination. A class that owns or controls the means of production must also have adequate assurance, at the least, of the goodwill and protection of those who control the means of administration and coercion, and those who control the state must be able to rely on the cooperation of those who own or control the means of production. Control of the main means of communication and consent is likely to follow from control of the other two.[35]

By first identifying the relations of production and the complex structure of the classes and sub-classes in a society, and then by examining both the exploitation and the domination of the subordinate class, a more complete understanding of any class struggle within that society can be gained.

Class analysis has rarely been applied to Aboriginal history in Canada even though it can offer some interesting insights. Ron Bourgeault is one of the few scholars who has used class analysis and, therefore, his work makes an important contribution towards understanding Aboriginal history in Canada. Bourgeault argued that "history, and history only, has taught us that the fundamental proposition of the modern world is that class struggle between oppressing and oppressed, between exploiting and exploited classes is the motive force of history."[36] He further argued that it is the economic base

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[34] Miliband, "Class Analysis," 329.
[35] Miliband, "Class Analysis," 329.
[36] Ron Bourgeault, "The Struggle for Class and Nation: The Origin of the Métis in Canada and the National Question," in *1492-1992: Five Centuries of Imperialism and Resistance*, ed. Ron Bourgeault *et al.* (Winnipeg: Society for Socialist Studies/Fernwood Publishing, 1992), 155. See also, Ron Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Métis and the Fur Trade: Class, Sexism and Racism in the Transition from 'Communism' to Capitalism," *Studies in Political Economy* 12 (1983); and, Ron Bourgeault, "Race, Class and Gender: Colonial Domination of Indian Women," *Socialist Studies: A Canadian Annual*, No. 5 (1989).

that defines and shapes each class struggle, and that within colonized countries the class struggles often appear as efforts towards the liberation of an ethnic group.[37] Using these fundamental assumptions, Bourgeault attempted to apply a traditional, Marxist class analysis to Canada's fur trade and its role in the development of a Métis identity.

Bourgeault's main premise is that the fur trade exploited Aboriginal labour by creating divisions in Rupertsland society based on class, race and gender. These divisions allowed for the development of a feudal relationship that oppressed the Aboriginal peoples and influenced the formation of the Dominion of Canada. While Bourgeault's work makes an important contribution towards understanding that a system of exploitation and class was imposed on the Aboriginal peoples of Canada through the fur trade, his application of traditional class analysis does not adequately account for the unique historical context of the fur trade and, therefore, does not clearly account for some of the important differences that distinguish the fur trade from other social formations that developed under expanding capitalist systems.

Bourgeault argued that the fur trade established a system of feudal relations between the Aboriginal peoples and the European traders. As he explained:

> The fur trade was feudalistic in the sense that the Indians as a primary source of labour for mercantilism, were transformed from producers of goods and services entirely for collective use, into a peasant or serf labour force bound to particular trading posts, with the commanding officer (on behalf of the merchant capitalist) functioning as a feudal lord.[38]

These feudal relationships introduced the concepts of private property and subservience to the Indigenous population. The Aboriginal men were expected to bring in 'rent' and 'tokens of their servitude' in the form of surplus food and furs given to the post outside the terms of trade.[39] The Aboriginal women were exploited sexually, partly as a means

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[37] Bourgeault, "Struggle for Class," 155.
[38] Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Métis and the Fur Trade," 48.
[39] Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Métis and the Fur Trade," 53, 77. For an alternative view on these relationships see, Frank Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail': Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), 42.

of establishing and maintaining trade relations (which were achieved when the fur trade officers entered into sexual partnerships with influential Aboriginal women) and partly because no European women were allowed into Rupertsland.[40] While the European mercantilists coerced the Indians to trade, they "intentionally reproduced the fundamentals of Indian communal relations of production, including natural subsistence and ethnic group organization, in a distorted and ruptured form."[41] Bourgeault argued that in this way mercantilists were able to establish a viable fur trade.

However, this feudalistic perspective does not necessarily account for some alternative perspectives on certain aspects of the trade. For example, the surplus food and furs that are given to the fur trade posts outside the terms of trade that Bourgeault identified as the 'rents' and 'tokens of servitude' expected within feudal relationships, may be better explained as an expression of reciprocal obligation. There was, to a degree, a mutual dependency between the parties of trade and, to this end, the Aboriginal trappers might have presented surplus food and furs as gifts to the European traders in times of plenty, expecting that in times of famine the traders would ensure the physical survival of the Aboriginal men and their families.[42] As Arthur J. Ray explained, "Individuals were expected to share whatever surpluses they had with their families, close relatives, and members of the band. Indeed, as European traders learned, aid was often extended to strangers."[43] Such sharing of surpluses was never given any

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[40] Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Métis and the Fur Trade," 57. For alternative perspectives on the role of Aboriginal women in the fur trade see, Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1980) and Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980).

[41] Bourgeault, "Struggle for Class," 159.

[42] The European traders were dependent upon the Aboriginal trappers to bring in furs for trade and the Aboriginal people were dependent upon the European traders to provide them with any European goods that they might desire. Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: their role as hunters, trappers and middlemen in the lands southwest of the Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), xi; and, Arthur J. Ray and Donald Freeman, *'Give Us Good Measure:' An Economic Analysis of Relations Between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company before 1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 55, 59, 61.

[43] Arthur J. Ray, "Periodic Shortages, Native Welfare, and the Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1930," in *The Subarctic Fur Trade: Native Social and Economic Advantages*, ed. Shepard Krech III (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), 3.

true economic value nor was immediate compensation expected. There was, however, a reciprocal obligation attached that meant that the recipient of the aid would, in the future, share any of his surpluses with the giver of the aid.[44]

According to Bourgeault, the feudalistic relations of the fur trade established divisions between the Europeans and the Aboriginal peoples. At first, these divisions, or classes, were defined economically and socially, but gradually they became racially defined as a further means of subordination of the Aboriginal peoples.[45] In an effort to tie individual trappers to specific posts, the Hudson's Bay Company agreed to support their dependents. Generally speaking, however, Bourgeault argued that the responsibility of social reproduction was left to the Aboriginal communities.[46] The merchant capitalists of the fur trade were increasingly able to successfully appropriate the surplus-labour of the Aboriginal peoples in order to generate capital and aid in the circulation of commodities in Britain and Europe.[47]

Arthur J. Ray, on the other hand, has provided a different analysis than Bourgeault on these matters. Ray argued that the HBC agreed to support the dependents of the Aboriginal trappers as a means of securing a reliable labour source in a region where labour was scarce.[48] Ray further argued that the responsibility of social reproduction was, in fact, carried by the Company. The HBC instituted the debt system as a means to ensure that the Aboriginal trappers had the necessary supplies and equipment to care for their families while spending the season trapping. If the Aboriginal men did not have these supplies, they would be forced to spend the season providing for their families and not necessarily spend the season trapping for the Company.[49] Additionally, the HBC provided relief for destitute Aboriginal families as a

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[44] Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 3.
[45] Bourgeault, "Struggle for Class," 159.
[46] Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Métis and the Fur Trade," 53, 59.
[47] Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Métis and the Fur Trade," 51.
[48] Arthur J. Ray, "The Decline of Paternalism in the Hudson's Bay Company Fur Trade, 1870-1945," in *Merchant Credit and Labour Strategies in Historical Perspective*, ed. Rosemary E. Ommer (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), 188.
[49] Ray, "Decline of Paternalism," 189-91; and, Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 16-7.

further means of securing a reliable source of labour.[50] If the HBC had not agreed to accept these additional responsibilities for their labourers, the Aboriginal trappers would not likely have been able to participate in the trade and provide for their families at the same time.

Bourgeault argued that the mercantilists initially wished to prevent the development of a free labour market as it would have created an unnecessary burden upon the trade. In order to ensure that the capitalist labour market remained in Britain, the HBC prevented the movement of European women into Rupertsland and established a policy that any "Mixed descent children born out of clandestine relationships between Europeans and Indian women were ... to be brought up as Indians."[51] The evidence Bourgeault uses to support this argument, however, is Hudson's Bay Company correspondence from the Board of Governors in 1747. While the London directors may have wished to impose such a policy, most fur trade historians argue that these directives were largely ignored by the post factors in Rupertsland because of the advantages that were gained by allowing the Company men to establish relationships with Aboriginal women.[52] Furthermore, the widespread availability of land would have prevented the creation of a wage labour market regardless of whether the London directors wished to have one or not.[53] It took time for commercial relations to develop.

However, beginning in the late eighteenth century, and crystallizing after the merger of the fur trade companies in 1821, the HBC began to develop a local wage labour market. Bourgeault suggested that a local market was needed as wars, labour shortages in Europe, and an increase in the wages for the few available labourers made it extremely costly for the Company to continue drawing upon a European labour market. Not wanting to disrupt the feudal relationships that it had established with the

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[50] Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 8.
[51] Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Métis and the Fur Trade," 59.
[52] See for example, Brown, *Strangers in Blood*; Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*; and Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*.
[53] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 58.

Aboriginal peoples, the HBC turned to the increasing mixed descent population as a new source of wage labour.[54]

Bourgeault's analysis of the fur trade has several weaknesses. Most importantly is his limited understanding of the relations of production that were developed in the fur trade. He argued that the fur trade established feudalistic relationships between the European traders and the Aboriginal inhabitants. While it is true that the fur trade relationships were based on personal obligation, an important aspect of the 'feudal bond,' these relationships were simply not the 'classic European feudal relationships,' which involved a complex form of land ownership and political authority not found in the fur trade.[55] Therefore, feudalism does not accurately account for the mode of production nor the specific economic and labour relations established under the fur trade. However, Bourgeault's work does make an important contribution towards understanding class and society in nineteenth century Red River.

In the first twenty years after the establishment of the Red River colony in 1812, some of the mixed descent people, who were now considered to be in a class of their own — no longer simply Aboriginal, but certainly not European either — gradually began to develop commercial interests, became small land-owners, and even began to accumulate capital of their own. As these new members of the petty bourgeoisie increasingly gained power and influence, their interests began to conflict with those of the merchant bourgeoisie, the London directors of the HBC. As the interests of these classes diverged, conflicts and struggles between them began to take shape.[56] The structure of the fur trade in Canada allowed the vast majority of the surplus capital generated in the trade to be transferred to the London directors. Thus, Rupertsland, with

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[54] Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Métis and the Fur Trade," 60; and, Bourgeault, "Struggle for Class," 160. For an alternative view on the use of Aboriginal wage labour during times of labour shortages, see Carol M. Judd, "Native labour and social stratification in the Hudson's Bay Company's Northern Department, 1770-1870," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* Vol. 17, No. 4, (1980); and, Carol M. Judd, "'Mixt Bands of Many Nations': 1821-70," in *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference*, ed. Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

[55] Phillips, Introduction, xxxi.

[56] Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Métis and the Fur Trade," 65-6.

only a limited access to capital, remained underdeveloped. For this reason, Bourgeault argued that the class struggles in Red River society were defined mainly as ethnic struggles and a distinct Métis identity was created as a consequence.

The most important contribution that Bourgeault made to understanding the creation of a distinct Métis identity, is that the economic and labour relations experienced by the Métis in the fur trade were the integral influences in the development of their identity. The popular view that the Métis generated their identity by combining aspects of their dual heritage, a view that relies solely on biological and cultural explanations, portrays only a superficial understanding of the Métis people.[57] However, Bourgeault's use of a traditional class analysis framework, as developed to explain conditions in Britain following the Industrial Revolution, does not adequately take into account the unique economic conditions that were faced by the participants in the Canadian fur trade.

Bourgeault applied a framework developed to explain the circumstances following the Industrial Revolution in Britain. The economic conditions in Britain at this time, however, were not the same as those in Rupertsland. The most important difference was that Britain had an abundance of landless, urban workers whose only real alternative for survival was to sell their labour power to those who controlled the means of production.[58] In other words, Britain had a large pool of wage labourers willing to sell their labour power in exchange for wages. Rupertsland, on the other hand, suffered from a labour shortage. In addition, the widespread availability of land in the region would not have even supported the development of an extensive wage labour pool, as was previously discussed. Finally, the political and legal relations that existed in

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[57] Bourgeault, "Struggle for Class," 160. For examples of scholars who emphasize the biological and cultural aspects of Métis ethnogenesis, see Olive P. Dickason, "From 'One Nation' in the Northeast to 'New Nation' in the Northwest: A look at the emergence of the métis," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985); and, Donald Purich, *The Métis* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1988).

[58] Immanuel Wallerstein, "World Systems Analysis," in *Social Theory Today*, ed. Anthony Giddens and Jonathan Turner (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 319.

Rupertsland were not those that existed in Britain. As such, the relations of production established in the Canadian fur trade were not the same as the relations of production established in Britain after the Industrial Revolution. Therefore, a traditional class analysis, which has assumptions and perspectives relevant only to the economic and political conditions experienced by Britain after the Industrial Revolution, cannot truly account for the nature of the Métis struggles in Red River between 1816 and 1870 nor the development of a distinct Métis identity.

World Systems Analysis

A traditional class analysis does not provide a clear understanding of class conflict in any situation that differs significantly from that experienced by Britain following the Industrial Revolution. In particular, a traditional analysis does not always account for the relationships between a colony and its homeland nor does it account for how such colonial relationships can affect the mode of production and accumulation of capital in the colony. Immanuel Wallerstein's world system analysis overcomes this difficulty by examining capitalism as a mode of production that exists at an international level, not simply at the level of each individual nation-state. According to Wallerstein, it is not enough to understand how one particular local market operates, but instead how it interacts with and interconnects to the world system of capitalism as a whole. Only in this way can a clear understanding of class structures and class conflicts be gained.[59]

Wallerstein argued that capitalism, as a world system, was governed, or constrained, by a set of rules that were established by the complex interaction of four main 'sets of institutions,' consisting of:

> the multiple states linked in an interstate system; the multiple 'nations,' whether fully recognized or struggling for such public definition (and including those sub-nations, the 'ethnic groups'), in uneasy and uncertain relation to the states;

[59] Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 13-5.

> the classes, in evolving occupational contour and in oscillating degrees of consciousness; and the income-pooling units engaged in common householding, combining multiple persons engaged in multiple forms of labour and obtaining income from multiple sources, in uneasy relationship to the classes.[60]

The interplay of these institutions is the major defining force of history in the capitalist world.

Commodity chains define the flow of commodities and capital within the world system. These chains are geographically distinct in that they tend to originate in various areas of the globe, the areas labeled as 'peripheries' by Wallerstein, but end in one of only a few central areas of the world, which Wallerstein labeled as 'cores.' Over time, the functioning of these commodity chains has led to an even greater polarization of the core and periphery and has created a world hierarchy between them, with the core areas located at the top of the hierarchies where wages and quality of life are rated higher and capital accumulation is greater.[61] The geographical flow of the commodity chains and the ability of the core areas to accumulate more and more of the capital in the world is perpetuated mainly because of the unique ability of capitalism to disguise the motion of this unequal trade. It appears that the capitalist world market is controlled by 'impersonal economic forces,' but in reality it is controlled and influenced by the interplay of the dominant classes over the subordinate classes.[62]

One of the most important ways in which the dominant class could effect the flow of capital in their favour, was to adjust the prices of commodities regardless of external economic factors such as supply and demand. This adjustment could be achieved through the use of horizontal monopoly or vertical integration. A horizontal monopoly was created when one person, or a group of people working together as one, completely controlled one level of the exchange process. For example, one person or company was the sole merchant in a geographic region. Vertical integration, on the

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[60] Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, 64.
[61] Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, 30-1.
[62] Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, 32-3.

other hand, was achieved when one person or company controlled several links in one specific commodity chain. For example, one person or company not only had the ability to extract a particular raw material, but also to manufacture it, ship it to market and then offer it for sale in that market. Vertical integration allowed an even greater amount of the profit to be shifted to the core areas than before.[63] According to Wallerstein:

> vertical integration, just like the 'horizontal' monopoly, has not been rare. We are of course familiar with its most spectacular instances: the chartered companies of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the great merchant houses of the nineteenth, the transnational corporations of the twentieth. These were global structures seeking to encompass as many links in a commodity chain as possible.[64]

The Hudson's Bay Company clearly made use of vertical integration in its 1670 Charter to control the fur trade market. Therefore, it is important to understand how these factors influenced the interactions between and within the classes, both on a local level in Rupertsland and on a wider level that would include the HBC Board of Directors in London.

The colonial economic relationships that existed between Britain and Canada have been explored by several Canadian economic scholars and developed into a general theory most often referred to as the staples theory. Harold Innis, one of the first scholars to examine these colonial economic relationships, developed and applied the staple theory to the fur trade in Canada.[65] Innis argued that as the fur trade was established, an interesting relationship developed between the mercantilists in Britain and the fur traders in Canada. The traders were able to effectively supply raw materials (in this case fur) to be transformed into luxury goods by British manufacturers. Even while these manufacturers were reliant upon the supply of Canadian raw materials, the

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[63] Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, 29, 32.
[64] Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, 29.
[65] Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, revised edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

colony could not produce the luxury goods itself and was, therefore, also dependent upon the British manufacturers.[66]

As such, Innis argued that "the economic history of Canada has been dominated by the discrepancy between the centre and the margin of western civilization. Energy has been directed toward the exploitation of staple products and the tendency has been cumulative."[67] Therefore, an important aspect of the Canadian economic experience was the colonial relationships that existed between Britain and Canada and influenced the movement of capital towards Britain (the core) and away from Canada (the periphery). A hierarchy was established that placed Britain at the top, accumulating capital through the exploitation and underdevelopment of Canada and its staple products.

Inherent to the nature of any system based on a hierarchy of classes is a process of unequal exchange which lends itself naturally to conflicts and struggles between the classes. Each conflict will be expressed in a way which reflects its historical context, and, therefore, each conflict will vary. However, class conflicts can be divided into two general categories: conflicts trying to affect reformation of the existing system and conflicts trying to affect the complete transformation of the existing system. In the former category, the activist minority seeks to modify and improve the existing system, usually by working within that system. In the latter category, the activist minority seeks to end entirely their subordination and domination within the existing system. These conflicts go beyond the existing system and are in this way revolutionary.[68]

While class struggles are important to understand in order to observe reforms and modifications of the existing economic structure of a society, one cannot ignore the fact that there are also important struggles taking place *within* classes, especially the dominant class, as various members are constantly trying to shift the balance of power to their favour or keep the balance of power in their favour. Therefore, the two

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[66] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 391.
[67] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 385.
[68] Miliband, "Class Analysis," 334.

categories of conflict explored previously can be further defined. Generally, struggles between classes are concerned only with the reform and modification of the existing system. Only rarely does a member of the subordinate class have the influence or the capital to even attempt to disrupt the balance of power that exists for the dominant class. The subordinate class can, however, create enough pressure on the dominant class to affect change to the system. On the other hand, struggles that are concerned with affecting a complete transformation of the existing system are usually intra-class struggles. Such 'revolutionary' struggles are often meant to achieve a shift in the balance of power from one accumulator of capital to another.[69]

Transformative or revolutionary struggles have occurred most often in the semi-periphery as it is here that members of the local dominant class can begin to accumulate capital but soon discover that they have only limited power and opportunities in comparison to the core. These struggles can be misleading because the instigators often choose to gain support for their cause by using the language and ideals of nationalist movements. They stress a common unity between classes in the semi-periphery based on language, religion and heritage.[70] The strategy of these struggles often mobilized the popular forces, the subordinate class, by stressing the conditions of their oppression by the members of the dominant class of the core and urging them to work towards overturning the existing colonial system. Of course, by seizing state power, the revolutionary movement is, in effect, only shifting the balance of power to their favour. Therefore, the transformation that occurs concerns the power and influence of the elite of the semi-periphery, which, in fact, is often the initial motivation for the struggle anyway.[71]

Applying Wallerstein's world systems analysis to the fur trade in Canada, the class struggles that Ron Bourgeault described become clearer. Rupertsland generally, and Red River specifically, existed as a semi-periphery to Britain. The Hudson's Bay

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[69] Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, 62-3.
[70] Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, 87-8.
[71] Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, 68-9.

Company, using the advantages of monopoly and vertical integration, was able to appropriate the vast majority of the surplus capital generated in the fur trade for Britain, not for the elite of Rupertsland or Red River.[72] As a segment of the mixed descent population of Rupertsland began to accumulate capital, they became aware of their subordinate relationship to the dominant class in Britain. These members of the Métis elite were among the organizers of the Métis resistance beginning as early as 1816 and culminating in the Provisional Government of 1869.[73] Therefore, these struggles were not truly inter-class struggles but were instead intra-class struggles that took on the language of a nationalist movement and in so doing influenced the development and expression of a distinct Métis identity.

World systems analysis allows for a more complete understanding of the struggles and conflicts in Rupertsland by providing a framework that allows for the analysis of the relationships between Rupertsland and Britain. However, it does not explain how and why Rupertsland society developed as it did. A framework that allows for the analysis of the relations of production in the fur trade will explain this development. As was previously discussed, the terminology and concepts applicable to a traditional Marxist class analysis do not adequately account for the unique economic conditions that existed in Rupertsland. However, the theory of personal labour organization was created specifically to account for conditions in which capitalist commercial relations develop on the periphery of a industrialized free labour market.

Personal Labour Organization

As has been discussed previously, under a capitalist mode of production, the ideal relations of production are found within a wage labour market with a reserve army

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[72] Russel G. Rothney, *Mercantile Capital and the Livelihood of Residents of the Hudson's Bay Basin: A Marxist Interpretation* (M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1975).

[73] D. N. Sprague and R. P. Frye, *The Genealogy of the First Metis Nation* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1983), 38.

of labour. The labour reserve is created when land and property is costly and scarce so that labourers are willing to sell their labour power as a commodity. Additionally, a labour reserve implies that there are more potential labourers than there are work positions.[74] These ideal conditions were experienced in urban Britain after the Industrial Revolution. However, the economic conditions in many colonial situations, including Canada and Australia, were different.

For example, in the early stages of colonization, the capitalists interested in investing in Canada and Australia were faced by a substantial scarcity of labour. Several initiatives were undertaken to compensate for this, not the least of which were policies of encouraging indentured servitude in Canada and Australia.[75] These initiatives were only marginally successful, mainly because they were forms of unfree labour which, as was discussed previously, is not as productive or as adaptable as free labour.[76] Additionally, labour requirements, especially in Canada, were seasonal, not year-round. It proved to be less beneficial, economically speaking, if an employer could not make continuous use of his indentured servant or slave throughout the year.[77]

The capitalists in Canada and Australia faced another problem as well. Not only was there a scarcity of labourers, but there was also an abundance of inexpensive, available land. This situation meant that there were not many labourers willing to sell their labour power more than was necessary to save enough money to buy their own land. As Pentland explained, "land was cheap enough in Canada that after a few years work, most labourers were then able to go and purchase land and begin their own small farm. The pride and satisfaction of owning one's own piece of land often outweighed the attraction of potentially higher wages working for a landlord."[78] Neither Canada

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[74] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 24.
[75] Initially in Australia, much of the indentured servants were actually convicts who had been relocated to Australia. However, convict transportation ended in 1868 and other forms of indentured servitude were promoted (for example, bringing in servants from the South Pacific). Miles, *Capitalism and Unfree Labour*, 94, 100.
[76] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 3; and, Miles, *Capitalism and Unfree Labour*, 96.
[77] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 3.
[78] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 58.

nor Australia were in a position to make land unavailable or expensive; if they had, the United States would have become the destination for virtually all of the European immigrants. Such policies would have depleted the potential labour pool even more. Additionally, the traditional view that the HBC directors opposed the agricultural settlement of Rupertsland may also be a reflection of the potential threat to a steady European labour supply created by an abundance of inexpensive, available land.

Thus, the capitalists in Canada and Australia had to consider two important differences in the economic conditions that they experienced from that which their counterparts in Britain experienced after the Industrial Revolution. First, they had to compensate for the abundance of inexpensive land which provided the subordinate class with access to a potential means of production. Second, they had to contend with a shortage of labour which dramatically increased the wages necessary to attract labourers. The capitalists not only had to devise a method to attract labourers, but also a method to ensure that the labourers remained willing to work. The colonial capitalists, however, also held an advantage over their British counterparts. While labour was scarce, so too were employment opportunities. Therefore, a system which could envelope these mutual dependencies had to be created. In several instances, including the Rupertsland fur trade and the northern Australian cattle industry, employers chose a system of personal labour organization.

Personal labour organization was a theory introduced by H. Clare Pentland to describe a particular form of relations of production observed in certain Canadian industries during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. In particular, Pentland identified both the St. Maurice Forges and the fur trade as industries that made use of personal labour organization. In the mid-eighteenth century, the directors of the St. Maurice Forges tried to hire the necessary men, who were needed only seasonally, each year. However, a free labour market did not exist; there was not a surplus of labourers who had no other option but to wait until they were needed for work. As such, the company often had to rely upon force to recruit workers, a method which met with only limited success and much vocal resistance. Therefore, the directors adopted a new

method of recruitment and employment relations, based on personal labour organization, that would allow them the assurance of employing labourers when needed but, at the same time, would keep wages low.[79]

Pentland also recognized that the fur traders in Canada faced similar conditions of labour scarcity and relatively unattractive working conditions and turned to a similar manner of labour organization in compensation for these conditions. As Pentland explained:

> the isolation, the risks, the semi-military nature of organization, facilitated dependence on the leader and development of *esprit de corps*. The nature of the mature extended trade put a premium on paternalistic labour techniques in every respect. Only by winning the approval of his engagés could the trader expect to have skilful, willing men at the times and places required. It was necessary to select wisely, to pay well and to offer effective leadership. The men, though not without alternative means of employment, had a heavy investment in a specialized skill and an obligation to work effectively as a means of self-preservation.[80]

Not only did the fur trade companies face these economic conditions in respect to their needs for European workers, but they also faced them in respect to sustaining a viable trade with the Aboriginal peoples.[81] Similarly, these economic conditions were faced by the owners and operators of the cattle industry in northern Australia and defined the organization of Aboriginal labour in this industry.

Personal labour organization was a system in which the employer accepted the social overhead costs of his employees. In other words, instead of merely paying the labourer a wage in exchange for his labour power and ensuring the physical survival of the employee and his or her dependents, the employer also had to provide a certain amount of assistance to allow for the labourer's continual participation in the workforce (i.e. the employer recognized certain costs as necessary to allow for the continual

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[79] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 45.
[80] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 29.
[81] Ray, "Decline of Paternalism," 188-9.

participation in the industry). This assistance could come in direct or indirect forms and, specifically to the fur trade and the cattle industry, could be observed in the provision of food or the canceling of debts to the fur trade post or cattle station stores.[82] This situation allowed for both institutional and personal relationships to develop between the employer and the employees. This system had to be used on a permanent basis (i.e. throughout the year) even though most of the colonies' industries, including the fur trade and the cattle industry, required only seasonal labour. The capitalists could not risk the chance that labourers would not be found at times when labour demands were high if they only employed labourers on a seasonal basis. As Pentland explained:

> the employer ... took more or less permanent responsibility for the worker's overhead costs. He did so, even though he could not use the worker continuously, because the worker was sometimes indispensable and there was no dependable source of short-run supply. In exchange, the worker, as much by custom as contract, yielded up the chance of a momentary advantage with another employer.[83]

This interdependence continued as long as both labourers and employers were scarce. Once a free labour market with a steady and reliable labour pool was established and labourers could choose from several different employers, the social overhead costs were shifted from the responsibility of the employers to the responsibility of the labourers (and sometimes the state) because a substantial increase in the numbers of labourers and employers dramatically changed the economic conditions and created an opportunity for new labour relations to be established.

Personal labour organization also required that very specific relationships be developed between the employer and his employees. The employer had to become an effective and respected leader, not only to organize his labour force, but also to motivate

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[82] Innis, *Fur Trade in Canada*, 144; Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 7-8: Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 186; Dawn May, *Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry: Queensland from White Settlement to the Present* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1994), 49; and, Tim Rowse, "'Were You Ever Savages?' Aboriginal Insiders and Pastoralist Patronage," *Oceania* Vol. 58, No. 1 (1987), 84.

[83] Pentland, "Capitalistic Labour Market," 453.

it. The personal labour employer could not merely rely upon violence (as did the slave owner), nor could he threaten with dismissal (as did the industrial capitalist). He had to use positive incentives instead. In exchange, the employee also adjusted his or her attitudes to the situation. As Pentland explained:

> the employee, tied to one employer, usually made himself submissive and agreeable. The employer, deprived of the sanction of dismissal, substituted positive incentives to induce conscientious work ... To win enthusiastic support, the employer-leader endeavoured to display superior energy, intelligence and fairness. He cultivated desired attitudes by an abundance of personal (superior-inferior) contacts; by expressing and demonstrating his paternal interest in the welfare of his charges, especially in their lifetime employment and care in old age; and by appropriate festivities, favours and rewards. He catered to the foibles of his subordinates and sought to turn them to account. He could turn to expulsion as a last resort, but his success lay in winning positive loyal service.[84]

Thus personal labour organization ran under a system of hierarchies and status which allowed for the creation of employee dependence on the employer. Paternalism played an important role in ensuring that this system ran smoothly and the state helped to perpetuate and justify its use.

Paternalism and Personal Labour Organization

Personal labour organization was facilitated by a system of hierarchies and status that was explained and justified by paternalistic management techniques. Paternalistic

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[84] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 25. Evidence that these types of relationships existed in the fur trade can be found in HBC journals and correspondence. Some fur trade historians argue that these observations are proof of Aboriginal independence in the trade. See for example, P.C. Thistle, *Indian-European Trade Relations in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840*, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1986). Such arguments, however, tend to ignore any theoretical connections between the observations and the arguments and, therefore, ignore the important historical context of the fur trade as a capitalist mode of production.

management was able to "keep down wages, without reaping lowered morale in consequence, by substituting non-economic rewards."[85] Paternalism was self-preserving as it not only met the social and economic needs of the labourers, but it also inhibited movement within the system. Additionally, it was flexible enough that even industries utilizing a fixed labour force, such as the fur trade and the cattle industry, could adjust for changing market conditions by varying economic rewards while maintaining the previous social advantages offered in the industry.[86] Any new labourers entering into a company with personal labour organization were often children of old labourers and, therefore, little adjustments to the existing system were ever needed.[87] In other words, the children were socialized to accept the roles defined for them by the dominant class.

Marx argued that the mode of production, or substructure, in a society influenced the form of the superstructure, which includes the political and social institutions, of that society. As such, the paternalistic management of personal labour organization was often translated into state policies. In other words, the source of paternalism in much of the colonial state policies concerning Aboriginal peoples was not created from basic Eurocentric attitudes on the part of the colonizers, but was instead a development rooted in the paternalism of the pre-existing economic relations. This development is best exemplified by the establishment of institutional racism in most, if not all, capitalist societies.

Racism was the ideological method developed to justify the hierarchies of the workforce within capitalism and to justify the unequal distribution of income and other such 'rewards.'[88] It has always come *after* a group has been allocated to a certain role in

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[85] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 45.

[86] A fixed labour force is a work force that is stable in size and cannot be simply increased or decreased to adjust to changing market conditions as can a variable work force which is common to industrial production. Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, 21-2.

[87] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 46; and, Judd, "Native labour," 308.

[88] Immanuel Wallerstein has defined racism as "that set of ideological statements combined with that set of continuing practices which have had the consequence of maintaining a high correlation of ethnicity and work-force allocation over time." *Historical Capitalism*, 78.

the economy and, in colonial situations, it has come after the appropriation of Aboriginal peoples' lands and rights to justify the actions of the colonizers in securing not only the means of production but in creating a new class from which to draw upon as a source of inexpensive labour. Racism not only justified the inequalities inherent in capitalism, it also served to socialize the various groups into accepting the role that had been defined for them by the dominant class.[89]

Racism became institutionalized once state policies and government legislation began to perpetuate the racial ideologies. Such policies and legislation could, as was previously discussed, take on paternalistic qualities as well if they were influenced by economic systems utilizing paternalistic management techniques. In Australia, paternalistic Aboriginal policy and legislation appeared as early as 1897 in Queensland and remains to this day, albeit in a somewhat altered form.[90] In Canada, the first paternalistic policies were developed by the Hudson's Bay Company under its authority granted by the HBC Charter of 1670, in which the Company was essentially established as the government for Rupertsland.[91] By the late nineteenth century, the Dominion of Canada assumed the role of the state in Rupertsland, but it looked to the HBC for guidance in the development of Aboriginal policies. Thus, the paternalism that influenced the Company policies continued to influence Canadian state policies, even if the practice of personal labour organization was no longer extensively utilized in this period.[92]

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[89] Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, 78-9.

[90] For a discussion of this legislation, see Dawn May, *Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry: Queensland from White Settlement to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and, C.D. Rowley, *Aboriginal Policy and Practice*, Vols. I, II, III (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970 and 1971).

[91] E.E. Rich, *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1967); and, Brian Slattery, "Understanding Aboriginal Rights," *The Canadian Bar Review* Vol. 66 (1987), 760, 764-7, 772-4.

[92] Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 30-49, 199-221; Frank Tough, "Buying Out the Bay: Aboriginal Rights and the Economic Policies of the Department of Indian Affairs after 1870," in *The First Ones: Readings in Indian/Native Studies*, ed. David R. Miller, et al. (Craven: Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Press, 1992), 401; and, Ray, "The Decline of Paternalism."

To summarize, institutional racism and paternalism were used by the state in Canada and Australia in order to justify the racially defined hierarchy that was created in the personal labour organization used by the Rupertsland fur trade and the northern Australian cattle industry.

Conclusion

Personal labour organization can be developed as a suitable system to govern the relations of production if four basic conditions are met. First, there has to be a scarcity of labourers. This scarcity can be created by a remoteness of location, a particular skill level that is required for production, or a combination of the two. Second, the labourers should have the ability to hinder production by leaving their employment or by producing an inferior quality of work. Third, the employer must enjoy a monopoly situation in order to retain labourers and bring in enough profit to cover the workers' social overhead costs on a permanent basis, regardless of whether the work is seasonal or not. Finally, the employer must use incentives other than the threat of unemployment to obtain satisfactory work from his employees. Personal labour organization can develop more quickly if skilled labourers are needed and if the employer can offer continuous, as compared to seasonal, employment. However, these are not necessary conditions.[93]

When personal labour organization is established, paternalism becomes an important means to ensure that the system operates smoothly within the hierarchies that it creates. This system of paternalism can then be expressed in state policies and government legislation which are influenced by the economic relations in society. As such, paternalism, often expressed in racial terms, can become a means to justify the inequalities inherent to capitalist systems. Capitalist systems interact on a world-wide

[93] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 60.

level and these interactions have important consequences for the core and the periphery and the relationships between the two. Therefore, it is also important to consider the colonial relationships that existed between Britain and its colonies and the effects that these relationships had on colonial societies.

The fur trade in Canada and the cattle industry in Australia both faced an economic environment in which these conditions were met. Furthermore, both industries chose to develop a system of personal labour organization in order to establish an effective mode of production. The hierarchical relationships developed under this system, and the role of external forces provide a framework from which to understand the creation of a distinct Métis identity in Canada and its absence in Australia and is useful in understanding the changes in an industry as the economic conditions it faced were transformed over time. A detailed examination of the use of personal labour organization in the Rupertsland fur trade is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Three: The Rupertsland Fur Trade, 1670 - 1870

Some scholars argue that the fur trade in Canada was an elaborate ceremony designed to continually reaffirm political and military alliances between the Aboriginal and European participants of the trade. Such claims may be somewhat applicable to the trade in the Atlantic provinces and parts of central Canada. Along the Atlantic coast, the fur trade was initially a subsidiary of the cod fisheries. Therefore, the economic concerns of the fur trade were not always the top priority of the colonists.[1] Even in the Great Lakes region, where the fur trade was independent of other industries, extensive warfare between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Huron encouraged the French traders to use these divisions as a means to combat British and Dutch competition. Thus, the Great Lakes trade took on important military and political overtones that sometimes overshadowed the economic ones.[2]

Such was not the case in Rupertsland, however. Unlike other regions in Canada, the geographic and economic conditions in Rupertsland were such that the fur trade could develop as a large-scale economic activity. As Innis explained:

> The existence of large numbers of fur-bearing animals presupposes a sparsely populated area with consequent limited development of transportation facilities and a general dependence on water transportation. Fur trade development on a large scale assumes a vast territory drained by great rivers such as characterize the north temperate climates ...[3]

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[1] Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), 9.

[2] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 82; Arthur J. Ray and Donald Freeman, *Give Us Good Measure: An Economic Analysis of Relations Between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company Before 1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 22; and, *E.E.* Rich, *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1967), 8.

[3] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 9.

These prime geographic and economic conditions allowed the economic purposes of the Rupertsland trade to outweigh any political ones.[4] Thus, in order to completely understand the trade that was firmly established in Rupertsland by the late seventeenth century, it is important to approach it as an economic system and not a political ceremony.

The Organization of the Rupertsland Fur Trade

The Rupertsland fur trade operated most effectively under a system of centralized organization and policy. Both the merchants in Montreal and the Hudson's Bay Company directors in London were responsible for the overall organization and operation of the trade. However, they were at the same time reliant upon the abilities of the chief factor, or trader, who was directly responsible for the daily operations of the trade, especially during times of intense competition.[5] Underneath the external centralized organization of the directors and merchants, the trading posts ran as single units under the command of the chief factor or trader. The treatment of posts as single units was predominantly a measure to ensure that company posts were not in competition with each other.[6]

Self-sufficiency helped to lessen the significant overhead costs of the trade. For example, the posts were expected to obtain building supplies from the surrounding country as much as possible and labour contracts were signed for a three to five year period to allow the men the opportunity to adjust to their new surroundings and to help provide a relatively stable source of labour. Company men were responsible for numerous jobs, including cutting and hauling timber, hunting, fishing, constructing

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[4] Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 62.
[5] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 112.
[6] Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 249.

deadfalls for fur, storing goods, and packing furs. Within these self-sufficient units, rigid employment hierarchies and centralized control were still the norm.[7]

Organization was an important aspect of the trade because the trading companies had to contend with significant operating costs, as did many companies concerned with exporting commodities. Generally, these included two types of costs. The fixed costs of the trade were those costs that had to be covered regardless of the year's success in trade. These included such costs as wages for post workers and boat crews and various administrative costs. Even though the actual amount of the costs might fluctuate, the need to cover such costs was constant. The variable costs of the trade were directly connected with the expected fur returns each year. These included the purchase of manufactured goods suitable for the trade and the cost of shipping between Canada and Britain.

One of the most important operating costs of the fur trade was directly tied to transportation, especially between the posts in Rupertsland. Transportation was also an important organizational issue in the fur trade and continuing expansion forced the trading companies to continually find improvements in their transportation systems.[8] The constant attempt by the trading companies to reduce operating costs was an important influence in the history of the fur trade and the development of Rupertsland. Additionally, cooperation and communication between the directors overseas, the workers in Montreal and the supply depots on the Hudson Bay, and the men in the interior was strictly maintained in order for the trade to function efficiently.[9] At the same time, the officers and directors of the companies had to understand the motivations of the Aboriginal participants of the fur trade in order to establish and maintain a viable trade.

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[7] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 134.
[8] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 247, 293; and, Frank Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail:' Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), 44.
[9] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 212.

The overseas directors and the Montreal merchants were most concerned with fulfilling the demand for furs in Europe. Price fluctuations in the European market were common as fur was essentially a luxury item and, therefore, the demand for it was rarely constant. These price fluctuations plagued the fur companies and were reflected not only in the value of furs, but also in the value and price of the manufactured goods sent to Canada to trade.[10] While the prices fluctuated in the European market, the economic conditions in Rupertsland did not allow the fur traders to simply adjust the price of commodities and furs to follow the market trends. This situation became one of the most important issues facing the chief factors and traders in Rupertsland, especially for the Hudson's Bay Company.

In Europe, changes in the market were reflected quite simply in the increase or decrease of prices for various commodities. Similar responses to changing market conditions were not possible in Rupertsland for several reasons. For example, particularly during the early period of trade, many Aboriginal trappers had considerable distances over hazardous routes to travel to the HBC posts. Therefore, in order to ensure that they would be able to trade for an adequate amount of goods to last until their next trip to the post, the trappers required a stable standard of trade so that they could be secure in their knowledge that they were transporting a sufficient number of furs.[11] Furthermore, a stable standard allowed the trade to be carried out expediently, which was important as short seasons in Rupertsland allowed for only narrow windows of opportunity during which the trappers could journey to the Bay. In fact, the London directors hoped that a fixed standard would allow some trappers to make more than one trip to the Bay each year. Expedient trading negotiations also benefited the HBC as it allowed little time for Company servants to initiate illegal, private trading while official negotiations were being conducted.[12]

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[10] Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 53-4.
[11] Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 224.
[12] Arthur J. Ray, "Periodic Shortages, Native Welfare, and the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1930," in *The Subarctic Fur Trade: Native Social and Economic Advantages*, ed. Shepard Krech III (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), 41-2.

While a stable standard of trade benefited both the Company and the Aboriginal trappers in several ways, it did not allow for adjustments to be made that could adapt to changing market conditions in Europe. Some flexibility in the trade was needed and, therefore, the factors began to advance an unofficial standard of trade, sometimes called the factor's standard.[13] In essence, the official standard was used as a general guideline for the trade but every year the unofficial standard was negotiated and used to reflect the market conditions in Europe and the general quality of the pelts delivered to the post. Eventually, this became an important aspect of the Hudson's Bay Company trading policy and allowed the Company to carry the social overhead costs of the Aboriginal trappers.

As can be seen by the development of the double standard of trade, the Aboriginal trappers had one of the most influential roles in the fur trade. As E.E. Rich explained:

> The trading Indians had dictated the pattern of trade, and reaction against the monopoly of the trading Indians had dictated the expansion of the trade from the earliest days. The Indian and his role were all-important ... But they were not the accepted commonplaces of the English company for many important years; and when they were at last acknowledged as the normal facts of the trade they were accepted in a somewhat peculiar way because, the French having intervened (and later the Northwesters), English attention was concentrated on European rivals. So, little attention was paid to the need to reach past the trading Indians and to secure better prices by direct access to the hunting tribes. Where the Indians figured in English policy was in a series of attempts to prevent them from diverting furs to European rivals rather than in efforts to penetrate through the trading Indians to the hunters.[14]

Although the trading companies may have misunderstood, or at least failed to openly acknowledge, the influence of the Aboriginal trappers, the trade was conducted and

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[13] Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 42; and, Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: their role as trappers, hunters, and middlemen in the lands southwest of Hudson Bay 1660 - 1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 65.

[14] E.E. Rich, "Trade Habits and Economic Motivation Among the Indians of North America," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* Vol. 26, No. 1 (1960), 42.

adapted to respond to the demands of the trappers.[15] The trading companies only dealt with goods that were known to be desired and accepted by the Aboriginal peoples.[16] The Hudson's Bay Company continually took cues from the French traders as to what manufactured goods would be most acceptable.[17] The chief factors of the HBC posts were required to submit detailed reports concerning Aboriginal demands. In addition, they were ordered to return any goods rejected by the Aboriginal trappers and to provide examples of those goods most desired.[18]

At the same time, the Aboriginal trappers were shrewd consumers and held high expectations for the quality of goods offered by the trading companies. They examined all metalware, guns and traps carefully for any flaws that might lead to the need for repairs or replacement during the winter. They understood that the extreme cold temperatures in Rupertsland often made the iron brittle and susceptible to breakage.[19] These high standards were also applied to goods that were considered luxury items by the British. In particular, Aboriginal demands concerning the quality of tobacco imported by the Hudson's Bay Company were well defined; the trappers would trade only for the highest quality Brazilian tobacco.[20]

While the demands of the Aboriginal trappers were varied and exact, they can be summarized into three basic concerns. First, the trappers negotiated each year for their furs to be taken at favourable rates. Second, they demanded lightweight, durable merchandise that could withstand the harsh environment of Rupertsland. Finally, they expected quality metalware that could last an entire winter without needing repair or

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[15] Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 61.
[16] Rich, "Trade Habits," 49.
[17] The French influence on the HBC trade was even further enhanced by the influence and direction of the two famous French traders and explorers, Pierre Esprit Radisson and M. C. des Groseilliers, who had approached the British Crown for support in their efforts to expand the fur trade under monopoly conditions after failing to receive such support from the French Crown. Arthur J. Ray, "Indians as Consumers in the Eighteenth Century," in *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference*, ed. Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 256.
[18] Ray, "Indians as Consumers," 257-8.
[19] Ray, "Indians as Consumers," 261.
[20] Ray, "Indians as Consumers," 263.

replacement.[21] Clearly, the Aboriginal trappers had very definite goals that they expected to achieve by engaging in the fur trade. And also clearly, the major motivations of the Aboriginal trappers in the Rupertsland fur trade were fueled predominantly by economic concerns, not political or military alliances as in the Great Lakes trade.

Evidence for the economic motivation of the Aboriginal trappers is not only found in their demands for quality merchandise, but also in their bargaining strategies and trade speeches. The trappers often made exaggerated complaints concerning the quality of goods, especially in comparison to the merchandise offered by rival companies, as an attempt to lower the prices of the merchandise. In general, this proved to be an effective technique as both the Hudson's Bay Company and the French traders worked hard at improving the quality of their merchandise and at lowering their prices.[22] As Ray explained:

> ... the Indians not only successfully pressured the company to relax the standards of trade, but also brought about an improvement in the quality of goods offered to them. They effected change ... even though the company officials were convinced the merchandise they offered was the best available locally.[23]

Aboriginal trappers were also known at times to exaggerate the harsh conditions and privations they suffered over the winter in the hopes of receiving more favourable trading conditions.[24] Finally, in the formal trade speeches made by the trading captains, the Aboriginal men called for fair dealings, full measures, reasonably priced merchandise and good values for their furs. The Rupertsland trappers were motivated

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[21] Ray, "Indians as Consumers," 268.
[22] Ray, "Indians as Consumers," 266.
[23] Ray, "Indians as Consumers," 267.
[24] Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 2.

predominantly by price, quality and convenience over any political allegiance to one company or another.[25]

While the Aboriginal trappers generally approached the fur trade from an economic standpoint, their responses to various changes in the trade did not always correspond with 'classic' European responses. For example, the Aboriginal trappers traded only for the quantity of goods needed for the year.[26] This practice was due partly to the high mobility of the Aboriginal groups which reduced the advantages of acquiring more goods than were necessary. Additionally, the trappers had only limited room for cargo in their canoes and, therefore, could only transport the absolute necessities.[27] In essence, this situation meant that when the trading companies raised the value of furs they did not get an increase in fur returns as they expected, but instead experienced a decrease in fur returns as less furs were then needed for the trappers to acquire all that was necessary.[28] This phenomenon is referred to as a backwards sloping supply curve. Similarly, periods of intense competition between trading companies encouraged lavish gift-giving as a means to induce trade. The overall effect, however, was a decrease in fur returns as once again less furs were required for the trappers to acquire their necessities,[29] not to mention that there were simply more companies through which a stable number of furs were distributed.

After this brief examination of the fur trade operations, it is clear that the Rupertsland fur trade was an economic system. While the organization may not have been typical of many economic activities in Industrial Britain and while the responses of the Aboriginal trappers to changes in the market were not always typical of European

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[25] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 17; Ray, "Indians as Consumers," 255; and, Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 232-3.

[26] Even the Aboriginal middlemen, predominantly the Cree and Assiniboine peoples, who specialized in transporting and trading manufactured goods to the Aboriginal peoples in the interior without direct access to the trading companies, did not purchase many more commodities than they themselves would need for a year, at least prior to 1750. They traded their used merchandise to the interior peoples. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 68-9.

[27] Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 223.

[28] Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 223; and, Rich, "Trade Habits," 47.

[29] Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 225.

peoples, the motivations of both participants in the Rupertsland trade were based on economic concerns and influenced by British, mercantile ideals and Aboriginal goals and desires. To truly understand the organization of the Rupertsland fur trade, and thus the economic and labour relations that developed within it, it is necessary to understand the economic conditions faced by the participants of the trade and their responses to them.

The Economic Conditions in Rupertsland, 1670 - 1870

The Rupertsland fur trade developed and operated under the economic conditions necessary for the development of personal labour organization. A scarcity of labourers was created in Rupertsland in two basic ways. First, the trading posts in Rupertsland were far removed from any major European settlement. Attracting labourers from Europe, and even eastern Canada, and convincing them to move to an unsettled territory was an important obstacle faced by the fur trading companies. These companies were also reluctant to encourage large-scale agricultural settlement in Rupertsland as previous experience in eastern Canada and the Great Lakes region demonstrated that settlement negatively impacted upon the fur trade.[30]

The trading companies also desired skilled labour which created a scarcity in labour sources.[31] Numerous correspondence between HBC posts stressed the need for experienced men to be engaged and sent to Rupertsland. James Sutherland complained that inexperienced men often arrived at the various posts in a state of starvation after nearly finishing their food supplies early in the trip.[32] J.B. Lemoine also spoke of this need for experienced, competent men and complained of the significant cost to the HBC when a man was employed, transported to a post and then transported back again if he

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[30] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 37.
[31] Rich, "Trade Habits," 42.
[32] Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA), B.49/b/1, Correspondence Outwards, Norway House, 14 September, 1817.

proved to be unsuitable.[33] It was just as important to have experienced Aboriginal labourers as it was European labourers. The trading companies accepted the expert role of the Aboriginal trapper and middleman as it was firmly believed that an Aboriginal man could perform these tasks far better than any European man.[34] The centuries of experience and knowledge of Rupertsland made the Aboriginal peoples vital to the success of the trade and gave them the ability to interfere with production and company operations.[35]

This scarcity of labourers, coupled with the extremely limited choice of trading companies with which the Aboriginal trappers could initiate trade, allowed for an interdependence to develop between the European and Aboriginal participants of the trade. The European men were dependent on not only the willingness of the Aboriginal men to continue trapping, but were also dependent on the Aboriginal knowledge and experience of living on the land. As Innis explained:

> Dependence of the Company on the Indian was closely related to the problem of reducing overhead. Indians were encouraged to hunt for the Company, especially during the goose season, although they required considerable training in the use of guns and were at first wasteful of powder. They made snowshoes for the men of the Company. Knowledge of the interior and of other tribes was gained from them ... Methods of hunting deer and other animals were also learned from the natives ... Constant reference to the Homeguard Indians in various journals was an indication of the dependence of the Company on the native population. The difficulties with which the English adapted themselves to new conditions were shown in the amount of sickness and the mortality rate. The borrowing of Indian cultural traits was important to the elimination of these particular difficulties and to the success of the Company.[36]

The trading companies could not have operated as successfully as they did without the continual participation of the Aboriginal men and women.

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[33] HBCA, B.49/b/1, Correspondence Outwards, Jack River, [Norway House], 15 October, 1817.
[34] HBCA, A. 9/4/79, cited in Rich, "Trade Habits," 42.
[35] Rich, "Trade Habits," 42.
[36] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 133-4.

At the same time, however, the Aboriginal trappers were dependent on the trading companies as well. In order to obtain the manufactured goods that they desired, the Aboriginal men had only a limited choice of suppliers. Eventually, they began to adapt some of their traditional systems of belief and land tenure to include commercial trapping as a means to reconcile this new economic activity with the more traditional ones.[37] Over time, involvement in commercial trapping focused on the most valuable fur resources and trappers began to hunt specific furs. Those Aboriginal groups in direct contact with the European traders became middlemen and eventually, after competition between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company spurred a rapid expansion of trading posts into the interior, the middlemen became provisioners. This economic specialization resulted in less time being spent on subsistence activities and generated an increasing dependence on the European traders.[38] This interdependence in the trade meant that both Aboriginal and European participants were susceptible to external disturbances in the trade.[39] However, the Aboriginal participants were in a unique position to create their own trade disturbances, which Pentland identified as the second condition necessary for the development of personal labour organization.

Fluctuations and disturbances in the trade were not uncommon. As Innis explained, there were several possible causes for these occurrences:

> A mild winter, inability of the Indians to return furs in payment, inability to meet the demands of the Montreal merchants and of the London agents – this was the logical sequence. Unfavourable regulation of the trade, delay in arrival of vessels from England, wars on the Continent ... Indian hostility, and competition were possible factors causing serious disturbance in the trade.[40]

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[37] Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail,'* 14.
[38] Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 3-4.
[39] For example: the cyclic nature of the fur populations meant that during some years furs were scarce; European warfare affected the price and quantity of manufactured goods; adverse weather and other such environmental factors interfered with the transportation of goods and furs. The occurrence of any of these situations often had serious impacts on the trade.
[40] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 212.

In addition, disturbances in the trade could also occur if the Aboriginal participants refused to trade or worked at an inferior rate, according to European standards. The Europeans' lack of knowledge and experience in the region made them sufficiently dependent on the willingness of the Aboriginal peoples to continue participating in the trade. If the terms of the trade were not sufficient to satisfy the needs of the Aboriginal trappers and their families, the fur trading companies soon discovered that the men would not continue to trap commercially. They would be forced to find new means through which to meet their needs.[41] As well, during times of intense competition, the trading companies endeavoured to establish personal contacts and obligations in the hopes of securing a trapper's return to a specific post.[42]

It was not only the Aboriginal trappers who had the ability to hinder production, but also the Aboriginal and Métis wage labourers who were hired on a regular basis by the HBC after the mid-nineteenth century. These men interfered with the fur trade most often by deserting or refusing to work at an efficient pace on the boat crews.[43] After the 1821 merger of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, many men were discharged as the HBC no longer needed to keep as many posts in operation as previously was the case. Some of these discharged men also began to create disturbances at Pembina, which impacted negatively on the trade.[44] Any disturbance or interference in the operations of the fur trade, especially those that concerned the transportation system, had immediate and serious impacts upon the success of the trade.[45]

The dominant fur trade companies enjoyed a monopoly in the fur trade, which proved to be an important aspect of success. The Hudson's Bay Company Charter of

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[41] Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 16-7; and, Innis, *Fur Trade*, 174.
[42] Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 186; and, Innis, *Fur Trade*, 40, 140.
[43] Carol M. Judd, "Native labour and social stratification in the Hudson's Bay Company's Northern Department, 1770-1870," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* Vol. 17, No. 4 (1980), 311; Edith I. Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company: Work, Discipline, and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770-1879* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), 156-193; and, Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail,'* 54.
[44] Judd, "Native labour," 310.
[45] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 114.

1670 gave the company a legal monopoly in Rupertsland. This was never a true monopoly in the strictest sense of the word, however, as first French traders and later several British companies based in Montreal were also licensed to trade in Rupertsland. Even so, the two dominant companies, the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, were each able to maintain a successful trade. This fact was achieved mainly by the goods and prices and the style of trade offered by the two companies.[46]

The HBC, with direct access to the sea, could offer better prices on heavier, bulkier items and better quality tobacco. The French traders, and later the NWC, on the other hand, who had long transport lines between Montreal and Rupertsland, predominantly traded in lighter weight, easy to transport goods, often at somewhat higher prices. However, the French traders and the NWC men traveled directly to the Aboriginal groups as a means to combat HBC competition. As M. de Clairambault d'Aigremont argued in 1710:

> Experience sufficiently proves that it is not to be expected that these nations will come in quest of them to Montreal; witness the few canoes that have come down within eight or nine years, except 1708, when about 60 descended. When these Indians will be obliged to go to a great distance to get their necessaries, they will always go to the cheapest market; whereas, were they to obtain their supplies at their door, they would take them, whatever the price may be.[47]

For some items, the Aboriginal peoples were willing to pay slightly higher prices simply for the convenience of not having to make a long and arduous journey to the Bay, which in essence, reduced their costs of trading.[48]

A true monopoly was not achieved until the merger of the HBC and the NWC in 1821 and even then this monopoly only lasted for a brief period of time in the Red River

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[46] Glen Makahonuk, "Wage-Labour in the Northwest Fur Trade Economy, 1760-1849," *Saskatchewan History* Vol. 41 (1988), 1-2.

[47] In Innis, *Fur Trade*, 59.

[48] This practice was most prominent in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, before the period of the most intense competition when the HBC was forced to establish posts further inland in order to compete effectively with the NWC. Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 33, 239-40; and, Innis, *Fur Trade*, 96, 152.

area before competition from free traders and the American Fur Company was established. Regardless, for almost two centuries the dominant fur trade companies were able to maintain a virtual monopoly of the two main transport routes into Rupertsland – one through the Hudson Bay and the other through the Great Lakes and southern river systems.

Perhaps to be completely accurate, it would be useful to refer to the Rupertsland trading companies as operating under an oligopoly type situation, as there was more than one company trading in Rupertsland. In any given spatial market, such as Rupertsland, the size of operating companies and the costs of transportation limit the number of companies which can operate in that particular region.[49] As such, Rupertsland could only sustain a limited number of fur trading companies for an extended length of time.[50] Even though more than one company operated in Rupertsland (as would be the case in any competitive market system), direct competition between the companies was limited because of the vastness of the region and the considerable costs of transportation.[51] The high operating costs of the trading companies promoted stable prices as there was considerable uncertainty in the potential gains and losses that might be sustained by a company if it drastically adjusted prices as a means to directly combat competition.[52] In this way, the trading companies in Rupertsland in essence operated under monopolistic conditions and, therefore, could maintain prices at a level that would allow them to generate profit.

Oligopoly control was important to the successful operation of the fur trade for several reasons. For example, it allowed the fur trade companies to lower the heavy operating costs by offering low wages and charging high prices on manufactured

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[49] M.L. Greenhut, *Microeconomics and the Space Economy: The Effectiveness of an Oligopolistic Market Economy* (*Chicago*: Scott Foresman and Company, 1963), 209, 289.

[50] Evidence for this situation can be found in the fact that several companies and individuals operated out of Montreal during the 1700s but were not truly effective in competing with the HBC until they banded together and formed the NWC in 1775.

[51] Harry W. Richardson, *Regional Economics: Location Theory, Urban Structure, and Regional Change* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 33.

[52] Richardson, *Regional Economics*, 34-6.

goods.[53] High prices for manufactured goods could be charged in oligopoly situations, as competitive prices were not an issue. Similarly, wages were kept low in oligopoly situations because under these conditions employment opportunities for most of the available work force were severely limited. If a potential labourer had only one or two employers from which to seek employment, he was forced to accept low wages, provided the needs of his family were still met.

Such was the case in the Rupertsland fur trade for the Aboriginal participants. Their employment opportunities were limited to narrowly defined roles within the fur trade.[54] As a result, the wages they received were relatively low and the prices that they paid for merchandise were relatively high. Wages in the fur trade were maintained at a stable rate over the years and men, both European and Aboriginal, were often paid in kind, especially in the more remote areas.[55] This situation suggests that the trading companies were successful in using their oligopoly control to reduce some of their overhead costs. Any changes in wages were often a direct result of competition or changes to the transportation system.[56]

Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 demonstrate the stability in wages over time and between HBC posts in Rupertsland.[57] Some of the unusually high wages can be attributed to individuals who completed more than one task or who were rewarded for loyal service. Likewise, some of the unusually low wages appear for men who deserted the service or perhaps were not working continuously throughout the year. Although the information from the English River District (Table 3.2) is not as complete as the information from Cumberland House (Table 3.1), it still demonstrates that wages increased only slightly over more than forty years. Additionally, the information demonstrates that the wages between the posts were relatively consistent.

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[53] Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 12; and, Innis, *Fur Trade*, 242, 311.
[54] Judd, "Native labour," 308.
[55] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 238-40.
[56] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 241.
[57] Only James Todd, a postmaster at Cumberland House, received a large wage increase from £30 to £60 between 1860 and 1864. However, after 1864 Todd's wage remained constant.

Oligopoly control within the fur trade also allowed for the development of large-scale, centralized organizations. This situation had several advantages, including: the development of a more controlled trade; improvements in administration and accounting; districts managed by one company partner; the development of more accurate accounting of debts owed to the post, especially the debts of Aboriginal trappers; and the development of elaborate communication systems which ensured that each post received the necessary supplies as quickly as possible.

Even though fur trade monopolies were continually blocked in New France, several of the contemporaries argued for the importance of monopoly control. For example, Charles Aubert de la Chesnaye wrote in 1670:

> Most of the habitants, having a large quantity of beaver, and receiving very little merchandise in exchange, are greatly hampered and unable to undertake anything for their own advancement. This would not occur should the King demand that all the habitants of this country, all merchants and dealers of Quebec place in the hands of a Company (formed for this purpose) all beaver *neufs* and *gras* received by them in exchange for their merchandise ... The said Company would give them in exchange, notes on solvent persons and would take upon itself all shipping risks, expenses and import duties into France of the said pelts, shipping them to France should it think best or leaving them in the country to await the highest prices. By means of these regulations, the Company thus formed would pledge itself to enter into relationship with the French and English of Acadia and establish a trade which might prove very advantageous both to the colony in Canada and to France herself.[58]

Even though Charles Aubert recognized the ability of a company in a monopoly situation to considerably reduce the operating costs of the trade, especially those costs concerning transportation between the colony and the mother country, no enduring fur trade monopoly formed in New France.

The importance of oligopoly control to an efficient fur trade organization was demonstrated after Governor George Simpson began restructuring the Hudson's Bay Company following the 1821 merger. As Innis explained:

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[58] *Report on the Price of Beaver*, 1670, in Innis, *Fur Trade*, 406-7.

Table 3.1: Occupations and Wages at Cumberland House, 1860 - 1866

	Range of Wages Over Time (£)			
Occupation	1860	1864	1865	1866
Postmaster	30-50	20-60	50-60	50-60
Apprentice Postmaster	20	---	20-70	20
Clerk	---	100	75-100	75-100
Apprentice Clerk	---	50	---	---
Blacksmith	30	35	35	35
Carpenter	25	---	---	---
Boat Builder	25-30	35	35	35
Guide	---	35	---	30
Interpreter*	25	7-25	35	25-35
Steersman*	25	10-25	25-28	20-25
Bowsman*	23-25	22-23	23	23
Middleman*	20-25	22	22	20-22
Laborer	20	22	22	14-22
Farm Hand	---	24	24	25
Fisherman	20-27	20-27	23-24	23-27
Interpreter and Carpenter	---	---	35	35
Interpreter and Laborer	---	---	33	---

*These labourers were most likely Aboriginal or Métis men.

Source: HBCA, B.49/d/84; B.49/d/92; and, B.49/d/98.

Table 3.2: Occupations and Wages in the English River District, 1824 and 1869

	Range of Wages Over Time (£)	
Occupation	1824	1869
Postmaster	---	40
Apprentice Postmaster	---	30-35
Clerk	---	75-100
Carpenter	---	25-35
Boat Builder	---	35
Guide	---	30-35
Interpreter*	40	30-40
Steersman*	23	27
Bowsman*	18-20	25
Middleman*	17	15-22
Laborer	---	22
Apprentice Laborer	---	10-15
Farm Hand/Cow Herd	---	25
Fisherman	---	22-25
Interpreter and Carpenter	---	41
Interpreter and Farmer	---	40
Interpreter and Fisherman	---	25-40
Bowsman and Fisherman	---	25-28
Laborer and Ox Driver	---	27

*These labourers were most likely Aboriginal or Métis men.

Source: HBCA, B.89/a/7; and, B.89/d/145.

> In the Northern department the amalgamated Company began the task of reorganizing the trade. This department became an excellent example of the economies of monopoly in the fur trade. The personnel was efficiently organized. Expenses were eliminated in every possible direction and control of the supply of furs was adjusted to price levels. The supply of provisions and supplies was developed with reference to the lowest possible cost in the self-sufficiency of each post, of the departments, and of the organization as a whole. Goods were imported, distributed, and handled with the greatest possible economy.[59]

Oligopoly control brought increased success to the fur trade companies as any measures needed to combat direct competition were no longer necessary.

While the fur trade flourished under oligopoly conditions, the trading companies soon realized that the motivations and goals of the work force in Britain and those of the Aboriginal participants in Rupertsland were vastly different and, therefore, a new means of labour organization had to be developed. Fur returns did not significantly increase when the companies simply introduced new goods or increased the value of prime pelts.[60] Additionally, the companies discovered that they could not refuse to accept poorer quality pelts, even if these furs could not be absorbed by the European markets. Refusing to accept these pelts often meant that the Aboriginal trappers would not return in the future. Therefore, in order to encourage the Aboriginal trappers to bring in as many high quality pelts as possible, the traders had to use positive incentives and could not simply refuse to trade lower quality furs.[61]

One of the most common forms of positive incentives initiated by the fur trading companies was the use of gifts and gratuities. Most often these were commodities such as knives, gun flints, hooks, awls, needles, thread and beads.[62] The best and most reliable trappers were rewarded with gifts, favours and promotions. After 1821, when

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[59] The Northern Department refers to a region defined after the 1821 merger which encompassed mainly Rupertsland. Innis, *Fur Trade*, 286.
[60] Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 225.
[61] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 106; and, Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 155.
[62] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 138, 320.

the Hudson's Bay Company attempted to establish fur conservation measures, Aboriginal trappers who carefully respected the trapping regulations were also rewarded with merchandise.[63] From the beginning, Aboriginal leaders were often given preferential treatment at the posts and gift-giving was used extensively to increase the leaders' status in an effort to increase fur returns.[64] For example, these trappers, titled 'trading captains' by the Hudson's Bay Company, were provided with a 'captain's outfit,' were the only Aboriginal men allowed inside the trading room, were never reproached for 'stealing,' were often provided with food while the trading was taking place and were sometimes invited to dine with the chief factor, particularly in the early trading period before the 1800s.[65] Aboriginal leaders were given even more gifts and preferential treatment if they could increase their following of trappers over the years, thereby securing an increase in fur returns for the post.[66]

Positive incentives were also extended to Hudson's Bay Company hiring practices and its treatment of Aboriginal wage labourers. The scarcity of labourers that the trading companies faced made it difficult for the employers to use the usual industrial capitalist methods to encourage the desired work behaviours. In other words, the companies could not simply dismiss any labourer that was not meeting their standards because of the difficulty they would face trying to replace him on short notice. Clearly, positive incentives were the only means through which to encourage the desired behaviours of both the Aboriginal trappers and the Aboriginal wage labourers.

The HBC generally only hired Aboriginal men as wage labourers during certain times of the year so as not to interfere with the trapping season.[67] The Company also made an effort to hire only the most reliable trappers as an encouragement to continue trapping when they were not employed.[68] Generally, they would only consider hiring

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[63] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 327.
[64] Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 141.
[65] Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 70.
[66] Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 228.
[67] One possible exception may be the mixed descent sons who were hired more formally by the HBC and were not expected to trap.
[68] HBCA, B.89/b/3; Judd, "Native labour," 308; and, Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 10.

those men who had brought in at least 20 Made Beaver from the previous winter. Additionally, whenever summer employment appeared to be interfering with winter trapping, the Company took action to reduce the number of Aboriginal labourers that they employed.[69] In this way, the HBC ensured that a large portion of the Aboriginal population would not be encouraged to give up trapping in pursuit of a wage labour position within the fur trade. Positive incentives were an important aspect of the successful organization of the Rupertsland fur trade.

The preceding discussion clearly demonstrates that the four economic conditions identified by Pentland as necessary for the development of personal labour organization – a scarcity of labourers, the ability of employees to hinder production, an employer monopoly and the use of positive incentives by the employer to motivate his work force – were experienced by the fur trade companies in Rupertsland. Additionally, the trading companies required skilled labour, one of the conditions that encourages personal labour organization to develop more quickly. Employment in the fur trade, however, was predominantly seasonal, not continuous. Regardless of this fact, first the French traders, followed by the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, developed personal labour organization as the means through which to operate and maintain a viable and profitable trade in Rupertsland.

Personal Labour Organization in the Rupertsland Fur Trade

An integral aspect of personal labour organization is that the employer accepts the social overhead costs of his employees. In essence, taking responsibility for the social overhead costs of the employees acted as a means of preserving the labour force. In Rupertsland, the mark-up on the price of commodities by the trading companies was so great that if debts and gratuities were not distributed amongst the Aboriginal trappers

[69] Judd, "Native labour," 308.

to supplement the goods which they received in exchange for their furs, many trappers would have been forced to abandon the trade.[70] Therefore, the trading companies developed several means by which to cover the social overhead costs of their Aboriginal employees and allow for their continued participation in the trade.

One means by which these costs were covered was through the payment of wages in kind. Instead of being provided with cash for their services, wage labourers were paid with commodities, for example: clothes, blankets, tobacco, brandy and any additional equipment that they might need to complete the required tasks. This wage system was even more elaborate in the more remote regions.[71] At other times, wages were paid plus extra gratuities were added on. For example, a labourer might receive a wage plus room and board and any equipment he needed to complete various tasks. Often extra gratuities were given for performing duties not specified in the labourer's contract.[72] Of course, while the labourers may have benefited from the provision of any necessary equipment, the trading companies benefited as well. Actual cash wages were kept low and large amounts of capital did not have to be readily available in Rupertsland; it could remain in London or Montreal.

The gift exchange ceremony was another means through which the trading companies covered the social overhead costs of its Aboriginal trappers. When the trading companies first began to introduce the trade to Rupertsland, the gift exchange was used to cement trading alliances, promote continued friendship and create personal obligations between a post and a trapper. Overtime, however, it came to be used by both sides as a means to achieve economic gain. The Europeans, who generally gave luxury and status items such as brandy, tobacco and captain's outfits, used the gift

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[70] Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 16-7. While Aboriginal trappers were not employees in the strictest sense of the term, the labour relationships established between the trappers and the European traders can be categorized as personal labour relations; therefore, it is convenient to speak of the Aboriginal trappers in the same manner as Aboriginal wage labourers.

[71] HBCA, B.49/d/99; B.89/d/107; B.89/d/145; B.89/d/198; B.89/d/200a; B.89/d/208; B.303/d/3a; and, Innis, *Fur Trade*, 238-40.

[72] HBCA, B.89/d/159; and, Carol M. Judd, "'Mixt Bands of Many Nations:' 1821-70," in *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference*, ed. Carol M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 128.

exchange to induce trade and encourage trading captains to increase their followings from year to year.[73] The Aboriginal trappers, who generally gave poorer quality furs and country produce, used the gift exchange at least partly for economic gain by giving gifts of lesser value than what they expected to receive.[74] The trading companies did, at times, provide gifts of utilitarian items as well, such as guns and ammunition, as a way to ensure that the trappers had the physical means to continue harvesting furs.[75] Thus, the gift exchange allowed the companies to partially cover the social overhead costs of the Aboriginal trappers.

The two most obvious means through which the fur trading companies covered the social overhead costs of the Aboriginal trappers and labourers were through the debt system and relief. The debt system most clearly recognized the needs of the trappers to possess certain equipment in order to spend a season trapping. In order to ensure that the trappers had this necessary equipment, the trading companies were willing to provide credit (based on the trader's assessment of the amount of furs likely to be procured by the trapper) at the beginning of the season before any furs had actually been harvested for that year. Abuses of this system were controlled as much as possible by reducing the amount of credit extended if the trapper failed to return with enough furs to repay his debt.[76]

The debt system was an important aspect of the trade and reflected an understanding not only of the costs necessary to participate in the trade, but also of the natural population cycles of the fur-bearing animals. The debt system carried the trappers through the years when particular fur populations were low. At times such as these, the trading companies wrote off the bad debts as a necessary means of ensuring

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[73] While tobacco and brandy were perhaps not formally part of the social overhead costs of the trade, they were important items in the system of personal labour organization and were at times used as positive incentives for good work behaviour.

[74] Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 242.

[75] Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure;'* and, Innis, *Fur Trade*, 133-4.

[76] Toby Morantz, "'So Evil a Practice': A Look at the Debt System in the James Bay Fur Trade," in *Merchant Credit and Labour Strategies in Historical Perspective*, ed. Rosemary E. Ommer (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), 204; Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 186; and, Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail,'* 17.

the continued participation of the Aboriginal trappers.[77] The companies quickly realized that the costs to them of operating the debt system were significantly less than the decrease in fur returns that would occur if the trappers could only afford to trap every other season instead of every season.[78]

Although the Hudson's Bay Company did benefit from the use of the debt system, from a purely capitalistic standpoint the policy seemed to involve an unnecessarily high degree of risk. There was no guarantee that the Company would be able to collect the debts owed and, in fact, it was not uncommon for the Company to simply forgive outstanding debts. Toby Morantz argued that the HBC was forced to implement the debt system because of intense competition. As she explained, credit "solved the predicament of any merchant who needed to ensure that he, and not his competitor, received the fur products of an Indian's winter hunt: he established a claim on the hunter through the advance on credit of merchandise useful to carrying out trapping activities."[79] As such, Morantz argued that depending on the economic, political and social atmosphere, at various times the Aboriginal trappers and the HBC traders were able to use the debt system to their own advantage.

Morantz identified four distinct periods of use and control of the debt system in the James Bay region: 1670 to 1821; 1821 to 1903; 1903 to 1926; and, 1926 to 1936. During the first period from 1670 to 1821, the HBC faced vigorous competition from first the French traders and then the North West Company. Credit was used to ensure a continual supply of furs because without credit the trappers would not have devoted their main efforts to harvesting furs; they would be forced to hunt for subsistence first. During the periods of the most intense competition, the HBC used not only credit but

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[77] Frank Tough, "Buying Out the Bay: Aboriginal Rights and the Economic Policies of the Department of Indian Affairs after 1870," in *The First Ones: Readings in Indian/Native Studies*, ed. David R. Miller, et al. (Craven: Saskatchewan Indian Federated College Press, 1992), 403; Morantz, "So Evil a Practice," 208-9, 211, 213; and, Arthur J. Ray, "The Decline of Paternalism in the Hudson's Bay Company Fur Trade, 1870-1945," in *Merchant Credit and Labour Strategies in Historical Perspective*, ed. Rosemary E. Ommer (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), 188-9.

[78] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 174; and, Harold A. Innis, "Rupert's Land in 1825," *Canadian Historical Review* Vol. 7, No. 4 (1926), 316.

[79] Morantz, "So Evil a Practice," 205.

also a system of rewards to encourage the trappers' return to the post each year. For example, luxury items were given to leaders who returned with large numbers of trappers to trade and, by the late eighteenth century, the Company also began to cancel the debts of loyal trappers.[80] In short, Morantz argued that the debt system was introduced and maintained in this period because of intense competition.

After the 1821 merger, however, the Hudson's Bay Company enjoyed a period relatively free from competition. Immediately after the merger, the obvious policy for the Company would have been to focus on collecting outstanding debts and eliminating the practice of extending credit. Morantz argued that while at first the HBC did try to restrict credit, by 1825 it became clear that as a result of serious animal depopulation the Aboriginal trappers could not survive the winter while continuing to trap commercially. As such, some trappers became indifferent to the trade and the Company was forced to re-introduce the debt system.[81] Due to the inability of the HBC to eliminate the debt system, Morantz argued that they began to use it to control the trappers and restrict their previously free movement between posts. The Company also tried to control the trappers by forgiving the debts of loyal and hardworking trappers.[82] In other words, Morantz argued that the HBC grudgingly continued to advance credit during this period because of the depopulation of fur-bearing and game animals but began using the debt system to control the movements of the Aboriginal trappers.

The beginning of the third period, starting in 1903, was characterized by new health and ecological pressures on the Cree people of the James Bay region. At this time there was a drastic decrease in the caribou population as well as an increase in epidemics among the local Cree population. As a result, when fur prices dropped during World War I, some Aboriginal trappers began to move away from commercial trapping. Even though this seemed like an opportune time to end the debt system, Morantz argued that increasing competition from the Revillon Freres company forced

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[80] Morantz, "So Evil a Practice," 208-9.
[81] Morantz, "So Evil a Practice," 210.
[82] Morantz, "So Evil a Practice," 211, 213.

the HBC to increase its advances.[83] As such, Morantz argued that during this period of renewed competition the HBC continued to advance credit for the same reasons as it did when faced with competition from the French traders and the NWC during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[84]

Morantz argued that it was only during the fourth period, from 1926 to 1936, that the HBC was finally able to curtail the debt system, although only for a brief period of time. Animal populations were seriously low during this period, especially from 1929 to 1932, and the Department of Indian Affairs was forced to begin issuing relief in 1933. As a result, the HBC restricted the advances it provided to Aboriginal trappers at this time. However, by 1938, increasing competition once again encouraged the Company to re-introduce credit.[85]

Morantz concluded that the Hudson's Bay Company was forced to introduce the debt system as the only viable means to ensure a steady supply of furs when faced with intense competition. The Company maintained the debt system during periods of monopoly control because the animal populations had decreased to the point that Aboriginal trappers could not devote a season to commercial trapping and still provide sufficiently for their families. Morantz further argued that the debt system was accepted by the Cree trappers as it conformed to their ideals of reciprocity. According to Morantz, the Cree believed that everyone had a moral obligation to provide for those people who were in need, understanding that when they, themselves, were in need, someone would come to their aid. This idea is supported by the fact that the Cree trappers did, under most circumstances, repay their debts, even during times of competition when they were not dependent on one company.[86] In sum, Morantz argued that the debt system was developed by the HBC to combat competition and was maintained to ensure a steady supply of furs.

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[83] Morantz, "So Evil a Practice," 214-5.
[84] Morantz, "So Evil a Practice," 217.
[85] Morantz, "So Evil a Practice," 218.
[86] Morantz, "So Evil a Practice," 221.

Although Toby Morantz provided a basic understanding of the debt system, there are some problems with her argument. While the debt system was introduced during a period of intense competition, it remains unclear why the HBC could not restrict credit during times of monopoly control. Her explanation of declining fur populations does not adequately explain the continuation of the debt system in regions where animals were still plentiful. Additionally, her argument that the Cree accepted the debt system because it fit into their ideals concerning reciprocity seemed to ignore the fact that the Europeans were familiar with systems of personal obligation as well. The feudal system, prevalent in Europe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, operated on a system of personal obligation created between the lord and his serfs. Perhaps even more importantly, the system of personal labour organization described by H. Clare Pentland also utilized personal obligations to maintain the hierarchies prevalent in this system. Arthur J. Ray used Pentland's theory of personal labour organization to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the debt system. This theoretical background used by Ray avoids some of the problems evident in Morantz's argument and provides a clearer explanation for why the debt system was introduced and maintained in Rupertsland.

Ray argued that because the fur trade operated in an environment where both the labourers and the employers were scarce, the trading companies introduced personal labour organization in order to sustain a viable trade. Under this system of labour relations, the trading companies accepted the social overhead costs of their employees. The debt system was introduced to allow the Hudson's Bay Company to cover these costs for their Aboriginal trappers and seasonal labourers. The paternalism characteristic of the 'old system' of trade prior to the 1950s was developed to maintain the system of personal labour organization.[87]

Ray argued that even though the debt system was first introduced during a period of intense competition in the fur trade, it was *not* introduced to combat competition

[87] Arthur J. Ray, " Decline of Paternalism," 188-9.

directly. Instead, it was introduced as a means to insure the participation of the Aboriginal trappers as it provided them with the necessary equipment for trapping at the start of each season. Both the HBC and the Aboriginal trappers benefited from this arrangement. As Ray explained:

> Indians counted on receiving the equipment and tools that they needed to hunt and trap regardless of their current economic or health circumstances. In this sense credit provided an economic safety net for native and trader alike since both of them depended on regular returns. In addition, company traders used the debt to establish a claim on some or all of an Indian's future returns. This was a major concern whenever local competition was keen.[88]

In other words, the debt system served competition by creating personal obligations between the Aboriginal trappers and the posts but was not actually introduced to directly combat competition. The debt system was introduced and maintained by the HBC to cover, at least partially, the social overhead costs of the employees.

This perspective of the debt system better explains why the HBC was unable to stop extending credit after the 1821 merger. While Morantz was correct that fur populations in some areas had seriously declined, the debt system was maintained in all regions occupied by the Hudson's Bay Company. Credit continued to be advanced because the conditions necessary for personal labour organization persisted in Rupertsland. As a result, even when debts were high, the Company continued to provide goods on credit to the Aboriginal trappers.[89] The Company took advantage of its monopoly situation, as Morantz pointed out, by canceling the debts of the most reliable trappers. Ray recognized this practice as an example of a positive incentive used by the HBC to ensure a steady return of furs.[90] Additionally, Ray argued that another example of a positive incentive used by the Company was its policy of hiring

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[88] Ray, "Decline of Paternalism," 189.
[89] HBCA, B.89/b/3.
[90] As was discussed previously, positive incentives are the means by which the employers can encourage good work behaviours under a system of personal labour organization. When an employer cannot rely on a competitive labour market, he cannot use the threat of unemployment to encourage good work behaviours from his employees. Positive incentives are his only viable options.

only the most reliable trappers as seasonal labourers. Positive incentives such as those mentioned above ensured a continual supply of furs for the Company.[91]

Ray argued that the HBC's old system of trade which used personal labour organization was slowly eroded after competitive labour markets were introduced in Rupertsland. Beginning in 1870 and particularly after the numbered treaties were signed, a new system of cash trade was slowly introduced to Rupertsland.[92] By 1900, the Company was under considerable stress to abandon the old operating system and stop carrying the social overhead costs of its Aboriginal employees. However, the poor economic and health conditions of the Aboriginal peoples made the transfer of these costs to the trappers themselves risky.[93] As Ray concluded, the HBC had to continue carrying the social overhead costs of its Aboriginal employees until after World War II when the federal government introduced a state-run welfare program. If the Company had ended the debt system any earlier, it would have risked annihilating its much needed labour source and brought an end to the HBC's profitable trade.[94]

The debt system was only one means by which the Hudson's Bay Company provided for the social overhead costs of its Aboriginal employees. The trading companies were also aware of the need to provide food aid during times of famine and hardship. This recognition clearly demonstrates the importance of the Aboriginal trapper to the fur trade and the willingness of the companies to accept the social overhead costs of these men. They understood that if they did not provide relief, the Aboriginal trappers would be forced to spend more time hunting game for their families' subsistence, especially as game became increasingly scarce. It was less costly for the companies to provide food relief than take the loss on fur returns if they did not.[95] At the same time, however, the trading companies were careful not to engage in a

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[91] Ray, "Decline of Paternalism," 190-1.
[92] Ray, "Decline of Paternalism," 192-3.
[93] Ray, "Decline of Paternalism," 196-7.
[94] Ray, "Decline of Paternalism," 201-2.
[95] HBCA, B.89/b/3; Rich, "Trade Habits," 45; Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 8, 10; and, Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail,'* 17.

straight welfare system. Many traders believed that straight welfare would discourage commercial trapping.[96] The combination of the debt system and food relief during the most desperate times, created a sense of personal obligation between the Aboriginal trappers and the trading companies.

The Hudson's Bay Company also recognized the need to support not only the Aboriginal trappers and wage labourers employed by the Company, but their families as well. The trappers' families were mainly cared for through the use of the debt system, the provision of relief and, at least initially, the gift exchange ceremony. The families of both the European and Aboriginal wage labourers, however, were also provided for more directly. Dependents were provided with free rations and lodgings at the post while the head of the household was employed by the HBC.[97]

Table 3.3 demonstrates the amount of food provisions given to officers, servants, families, voyageurs and strangers as well as the amount of provisions sold at various times of the year at the HBC post at Ile a la Crosse. On average, nearly 22percent of the food provisions at Ile a la Crosse were given to the families of HBC employees. The month of August, 1876 is the only time when the percentages differ significantly. Possibly, families required less Company food at this time of year as they could fish for themselves. It might also be that the voyageurs were receiving a higher percentage of food provisions this month because August was one of the busiest months of the year for these men. The percentage of food expenditures for the other categories of people in August are more consistent with the other months when the voyageurs are factored out, as indicated by the numbers in brackets in the table.

The debt system and the provision of relief and gratuities created personal obligations between the Aboriginal participants and the chief factors. These personal obligations were an important aspect of the labour relations that developed under the personal labour organization of the Rupertsland fur trade. As Ray explained:

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[96] Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 11.

[97] HBCA, B.89/b/3, Correspondence Outward, Ile a la Crosse, 6th April, 1826; and, Judd, "'Mixt Bands,'" 130.

Table 3.3: Percentage of Food Expenditures at Ile a la Crosse, 1875-1880

	Percent of Food Expenditures Over Time (%)					
People Receiving Food Provisions	November 1875	December 1875	April 1876	August 1876	April 1880	December 1880
Officers Mess*	10.22	12.08	14.05	2.28 (11.54)**	12.88	4.53
Servants	43.67	35.82	46.54	10.03 (50.82)**	44.36	52.29
Servants' Families	22.47	19.08	21.26	6.87 (34.81)**	18.95	15.41
Voyages	9.11	3.53	4.47	80.27	4.40	12.69
Strangers	1.25	6.49	6.96	0.32 (1.59)**	12.94	10.01
Sales	13.62	22.99	6.72	0.24 (1.24)**	6.47	5.08

*The categories of people receiving food are indicated in the same manner as the HBC records.

**The numbers in brackets indicate the percentage without the provisions sent on the voyages.

Source: HBCA, B.89/d/199; and, B.89/d/231.

> Additional support for, and control of, native people was achieved by the extension of credit as well as by the distribution of gratuities. The former was made available to able-bodied adult males; the latter to widows, orphans, the aged, and the infirm. The use of credit in the fur trade can be traced back to the earliest day of the Hudson's Bay Company's operations. By advancing to Indians outfits of goods, the company, and other traders as well, hoped to secure the future returns of hunts; credit, as well as gratuities, served to tide Indians over during times of poor hunting and trapping. Thus, from the beginning, debt and gratuities became essential to the fur trade. When European competition for Indians' furs was modest and the fur market steady or rising, the system was not too costly, and it gave the Europeans greater control over the Indians.[98]

The debt system and relief and gratuities served the needs of both the Aboriginal and the European participants in the trade and allowed the trading companies to establish both rigid occupational hierarchies and paternalistic management techniques through the personal obligations they created.

Occupational Hierarchies and Paternalistic Management Techniques

The trading companies, in particular the Hudson's Bay Company, organized their operations according to strict occupational hierarchies. In general, the officers (factors, chief traders and clerks) occupied the upper echelon while the servants (boatmen, tradesmen and general labourers) occupied the lower. The officers had more responsibilities than the servants and oversaw the functioning of the post. The officers were responsible for keeping post records, ordering merchandise and supplies, valuing furs, supervising the servants and ensuring that all necessary jobs were performed well. In return, the officers were given prestige, special privileges and higher salaries.[99] Ethnicity and race played an important role in determining a man's position in the HBC.

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[98] Ray, "Periodic Shortages," 10.

[99] Officers' salaries were initially a portion of the HBC's shares and profits. This practice was ended around 1821. Judd, "Native labour," 305.

Officers were most often mainland Scottish or English while servants were most often Orcadian or French Canadian.[100] The servant class formed the majority of HBC employees and Aboriginal men generally remained at the bottom of the hierarchy.[101]

The majority of the Aboriginal employees were engaged as trappers; however, some were hired seasonally as labourers, often being put to work on the boat crews or as guides.[102] Carol Judd argued that the Aboriginal trappers were not really employees of the trading companies; they acted more as free agents.[103] However, the trading companies engaged the trappers and encouraged them to continue trapping in ways suggested under a system of personal labour organization and in that sense, the trappers were engaged in a clear economic relationship with the company. In other words, even though the trappers were not formally employed under contract, the trading companies did cover the social overhead costs of these men and interacted with them in terms of paternalistic management techniques. Often, Aboriginal men were hired as seasonal labourers only when the HBC had no other recourse or as a means to control other European members of the labour force.[104] The trading companies' desire to avoid extensive use of Aboriginal labour was largely due to their need of the Aboriginal men to continue to produce fur every season.

Those Aboriginal men who were hired on contract were treated in similar ways to other European employees who occupied the same portion of the occupational hierarchy, at least prior to 1821. Both the Aboriginal and European servants were paid similar wages and both experienced similar working conditions. The only important difference between the Aboriginal and European servants was that, generally, only the

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[100] Judd, "Native labour," 305; and, Makahonuk, "Wage-Labour," 5.
[101] Judd, "Native labour," 308; and, Judd, "'Mixt Bands,'" 127.
[102] Judd, "Native labour," 306; and, Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail,'* 45.
[103] Judd, "Native labour," 306.
[104] For example, in 1805 when the HBC encountered resistance among their Orcadian servants, they turned to Aboriginal labourers in an attempt to reduce the influence and numbers of the resisting men. Judd, "Native labour," 306.

European servants were hired on extended contracts. Most Aboriginal servants were hired for a single season only.[105]

After the Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company merged in 1821, however, the occupational hierarchies became more distinct and ethnicity became more influential in determining a servant's future with the HBC. In particular, the merger began to affect the mixed descent labourers. Previously, mixed descent men had considerable mobility within the trading companies. After 1821, however, their opportunities to advance within the Company were seriously curtailed. Eventually, after several officers complained about the lack of opportunities for their mixed descent sons, Governor Simpson introduced an 'apprentice postmaster' position in 1844. It took 11 years to complete the apprenticeship and it was regarded by many as discriminatory.[106] By this time, most mixed descent employees had lost their opportunity to advance in the Company; only those who had an education obtained outside of Rupertsland and whose fathers were prominent and active officers were able to achieve officer status after 1821.[107] As Judd explained, "for the first time in the history of the fur trade ethnic derivation, 'class,' and status were intertwined. For the first time, it meant that as a native employee of the Hudson's Bay Company one was with few exceptions also a low-status member of the servant 'class.'"[108] After the 1821 merger and Governor Simpson's reorganization of the HBC, ethnicity became increasingly influential in the occupational hierarchies of the fur trade and institutional racism was introduced to Rupertsland.

The occupational hierarchies created in the fur trade were emphasized by both a physical and social separation among the various levels of the hierarchy. The social separation was created through the status, prestige and responsibility allotted to those at the top of the occupational stratification. Physical separation was achieved by building

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[105] Judd, "Native labour," 306-7.
[106] Glen Makahonuk suggested that the apprenticeship system also allowed the HBC to "get skilled work done at a cheap price," "Wage-Labour," 10.
[107] Judd, "Native labour," 312.
[108] Judd, "Native labour," 314.

separate living quarters for the officers and the servants. Even among the servants alone, those tradesmen who were trained to perform specific tasks, for example blacksmiths, carpenters and stone masons, were treated differently and housed separately from the general labourers. In addition, these tradesmen were not expected to perform any menial tasks. Such tasks were left solely to the responsibility of the general labourers.[109] Physical separation was also important in distinguishing between the Aboriginal trappers and the other company employees, especially in the Hudson's Bay Company. At HBC posts, Aboriginal trappers were most often expected to trade through the "hole-in-the-wall."[110] The only exception to this situation was the Aboriginal trading captains who were allowed directly into the trading room. Clearly, even the roles of the Aboriginal men were stratified, at least in the eyes of the European traders.

These occupational hierarchies were self-preserving as they served to socialize the children of the fur trade participants into accepting their pre-defined roles in the trade. Families and settlements were not originally encouraged by the trading companies. However, as competition became increasingly intense, support of controlled settlement and the acceptance of families grew as a means to ensure the availability of future company employees and to create stability within the work force.[111] The socialization process that occurred within these developing settlements and families is evidenced by the fact that most children who entered the fur trade achieved the same level of occupation as their fathers did before them.[112] This process served to stabilize the hierarchies and preserve the existing fur trade organization.

In order to maintain the occupational hierarchies created under personal labour organization, the trading companies used paternalistic management techniques. The paternalism accepted by the trading officers fostered an important feeling of

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[109] Judd, "'Mixt Bands,'" 128; and, Burley, *Servants*, 14-5.
[110] This feature was exactly as the name implies. Trade was conducted through a hole cut into the wall of the storage room where the trade goods were kept. Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 58.
[111] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 161-3.
[112] Judd, "Native labour," 308.

responsibility and loyalty among the general labourers. This *espirit de corps* was exemplified in the men's pride in their work and the ceremonies that were developed and performed without fail. As Innis explained:

> Men of the Athabasca department regarded themselves as the best travellers. Winterers looked with scorn on the *mangeurs du lard.* On arrival at the height of land above Lake Superior each recruit was initiated to the title of a northman by having water sprinkled in his face with a small cedar bow and by taking an oath that he would not allow any new man to pass that road without submitting to a similar ceremony, and that he would kiss no *voyageur*'s wife against her will.[113]

This *espirit de corps* was established between all levels of management, especially as the trade expanded further into Rupertsland and the chief traders at the post were located further from the central authorities in London or Montreal.[114]

Espirit de corps was only achieved if the trading officers could demonstrate effective leadership for the men. The best leaders won positive loyal service by establishing personal contacts in a way that maintained their superior employment status, displaying a paternal interest in their employees, demonstrating superior energy, intelligence and fairness, and supporting appropriate celebrations, rewards and favours.[115] While it was important for the HBC officers to demonstrate their leadership and their superiority over the general labourers, the labourers demanded fair treatment and would not tolerate abuses of the system by the officers. As Edith Burley explained:

> [the labourers'] relationship with the HBC was shaped both by the goals and demands of the company and by their own interests and priorities. They accepted their place in the hierarchy but were not subsumed in it. They brought with them their own notions of the proper relations of authority and were not

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[113] The *mangeurs du lard* were the men who transported goods by canoe from Montreal to Michilimackinac and then returned to Montreal in one season; they did not remain in Rupertsland over the winter. Innis, *Fur Trade*, 242.
[114] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 248.
[115] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 25.

> prepared to tolerate injustice, harsh treatment, and unreasonable demands simply because they had signed a contract.[116]

In other words, the authority of the officers rested on their ability to establish paternal relationships between themselves and their employees, not on any legal authority dictated by an employment contract. This kind of paternal leadership became even more important as the trade routes became longer. The traders and managers in both Rupertsland *and* Montreal and London were often apprentices in the interior prior to becoming leaders in the trade.[117] This situation allowed paternalistic management to influence all levels of the trading organization.

Both before and after the 1821 merger, there were incidents of various strikes, acts of resistance and protest among the HBC servants. Some scholars have speculated that much of this resistance concerned the issue of wages.[118] However, Edith Burley argued that while wage disputes occurred between HBC employers and the men with whom they were negotiating new employment contracts, wage disputes initiated by employees already on contract were rare, especially after 1821.[119] Instead, the most serious disputes concerned fair treatment and acceptable working conditions. More importantly, these disputes were not intended to deconstruct the HBC's employment hierarchy. As Burly explained:

> There is also no indication that the company's workers were developing what one might term a 'modern' view of employment relations and starting to behave like modern workers bargaining over pay and benefits in a capitalist system whose economic laws they had come to accept. Instead, they continued to operate within a traditional framework and to see their relationship with their employer as a moral one that was no mere monetary transaction.[120]

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[116] Burley, *Servants*, 15.
[117] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 112, 248.
[118] See, for example, Makahonuk, "Wage-Labour," 12.
[119] Burley, *Servants*, 202.
[120] Burley, *Servants*, 197.

In other words, HBC employees protested the aspects of their employment that contradicted their expectations of the paternal obligations held by the Company officers, not the hierarchical employment scheme itself.

The paternalistic management techniques were not only applied to the formally hired servants but also to the Aboriginal trappers. Paternalism was used to 'shape' Aboriginal responses to the trade and to explain the social hierarchies established in the trade. Many traders spoke of the need to 'control' Aboriginal trappers with a 'firm hand.' For example, in a letter written at Fort Garry in 1822, Governor George Simpson commented:

> I have made it my study to examine the nature and character of Indians and however repugnant it may be to our feelings, I am convinced they must be ruled with a rod of Iron to bring and keep them in a proper state of subordination, and the most certain way to effect this is by letting them feel their dependence upon us.[121]

The firmness and strictness used in the dealings with the Aboriginal trappers was an important part of the fatherly role assumed by the chief traders. The acceptance of paternalistic responsibilities by the chief traders towards the Aboriginal trappers was an important aspect of the personal labour organization that sustained the fur trade in Rupertsland for nearly two centuries.

The paternalism displayed by the officers of the trading companies towards their employees did not end once their employment contracts were completed. Retired servants and petty traders were given special prices at Hudson's Bay Company posts.[122] In particular, after the 1821 merger, when the HBC chose to retire a significant number of men, the Company saw the economic importance of continuing their paternal role. As it was explained in a letter dated 22 February, 1822:

> It has become a matter of serious importance to determine on the most proper measures to be adopted with regard to the men who have large families and who

[121] Unsigned letter dated Red River, Fort Garry, 20 May, 1822, in Innis, *Fur Trade*, 287.
[122] Innis, "Rupert's Land in 1825," 308.

> must be discharged, and with the numerous halfbreed children whose parents have died or deserted them. These people form a burden which cannot be got rid of without expense, and, if allowed to remain in their present condition, they will become dangerous to the Peace of the Country and safety of the Trading Posts. It will therefore be both prudent and economical to incur some expense in placing these people where they may maintain themselves and be civilized and instructed in Religion.
>
> We consider that all these people ought to be removed to Red River...[123]

In general, the HBC provided for its retired and disabled servants by providing pensions, re-hiring destitute partners and granting land in Red River.[124]

Paternalistic management techniques facilitated the adoption of highly centralized organization and control within the trading companies. Such centralized organization was most evident during times of monopoly, but was maintained to some degree even during the most intense competition.[125] The paternalism that was evident in the fur trade organizations was eventually translated into the paternalistic policies established by both the governments in New France and the Dominion of Canada as a means to effectively govern the colonies.[126] As such, paternalistic management became an important part of Canada's economic development.

The Decline of Personal Labour Organization in Rupertsland

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, competition between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company was intense. Competition forced the trading companies to continue providing heavy outlays of capital and the overhead costs of the trade soared as both companies continued to search for previously untapped resources. Eventually, the competition and heavy overhead costs of the trade led to a

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[123] In Innis, *Fur Trade*, 288.
[124] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 313.
[125] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 243.
[126] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 113.

merger of the two companies in 1821. As Innis explained:

> The geographic advantages of the Hudson's Bay Company were merged with the advantages of the type of organization which had developed in the French *régime* and which had been elaborated with such effectiveness in the Northwest Company ... The principle of the partnership was to persist as the dominant type of organization of the fur trade practically until the end of the nineteenth century. It was the device with which the trade could be prosecuted with the greatest effectiveness over great distances in which the central authority could exercise no direct control over the individual trader. On the other hand amalgamation marked in a definite way the beginning of control exercised by capital interests with headquarters in London.[127]

Even though the basic structure of the fur trade remained the same, significant reorganization concerning the details of the operation were introduced shortly after 1821.

Some of the most important changes introduced after the 1821 merger were efforts meant to reduce the overhead costs of the trade. This reduction was attempted in two ways: first, the number of HBC employees was reduced and, second, the extensive transportation system was improved. Governor George Simpson wished to reduce the wage payments by 25percent and attempted to do so by first laying off approximately 250 men immediately after the merger and then laying off even more over a period of several years.[128] The first men to be laid off were those who had large families. The HBC had a policy of supporting any family members of its employees and, therefore, Simpson expected to reduce a significant portion of overhead costs by eliminating the need to support large numbers of unemployed dependents. Simpson also laid off men who were not indebted to the Company. He hoped that by retaining those men who had Company debts, the HBC could eventually collect back some of this money owed.[129]

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[127] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 280.
[128] Judd, "'Mixt Bands,'" 130.
[129] Ibid.; and, Makahonuk, "Wage-Labour," 7. These measures seem a curious contradiction in terms of operational efficiency.

The transportation system had always been a major organizational issue of the fur trade and was the major cost of the trading companies.[130] Improvements in transportation were an important means through which the HBC reduced its costs after 1821. Transportation routes were revised, boats were increased in size and the number of boats in the brigades were reduced.[131] As settlement of the northern United States increased, the Hudson's Bay Company began to make use of the improvements in transportation introduced by the American settlers. By the mid-1840s, Red River carts were moving supplies between the Red River settlement and St. Paul.[132] By 1859, steamboats were introduced in Red River, dramatically reducing the number of men and boats needed to transport goods and, therefore, significantly reducing the cost of transportation in this area. In the more remote, interior regions, emphasis on the use of dog sleds, horses and Red River carts also helped to reduce the costs of transportation.[133]

In addition to improvements in the mode of transportation used by the Company, improvements in packing techniques, and more strict adherence to these techniques, also reduced overhead costs. For example, deer skin was no longer used as wrappings, claws were clipped to prevent the tearing of pelts during transportation, and bundles became much more uniform in composition and weight. Fur presses were used to give the bundles the same shape and levers were introduced to ensure that the bundles were as compact as possible. The most valuable commodities were distributed evenly throughout the bales to give each one a similar value and the weight and shape of each bundle was controlled so as to lend towards easier transport and less breakage.[134] Improvements in transportation not only served to reduce the overhead costs of the trade, they were also used to control the labour force. Increasingly in the nineteenth

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[130] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 343; and, Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail,'* 44.
[131] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 293.
[132] St. Paul was the northern most point used for navigation on the Mississippi River and freight could be moved inexpensively between Red River and St. Paul in comparison to the cost of transport between Red River and York Factory. Innis, *Fur Trade*, 294.
[133] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 294-6.
[134] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 298-9.

century, boat crews and other temporary employees began to stage strikes and interfere with the smooth operation of the trade. The HBC was gradually able to overcome some of these difficulties and regain control of its employees by reducing its reliance on large numbers of men.[135]

Gradually, the Hudson's Bay Company also began to place emphasis on controlling the types and quantities of pelts that it traded. Conservation measures were introduced and attempts to re-establish beaver populations in regions that had previously been trapped out began. Officers who did not conform to the new conservation policies were retired and Aboriginal trappers who carefully respected the regulations were rewarded. These conservation means not only served to protect the future of the fur trade, but also the Company's profits; high duties were paid in England for any cub skin that was imported. The HBC also introduced tariffs to control the trade in specific furs. For example, the remote posts were encouraged through tariff adjustments to traffic only in lighter and more valuable furs, while the trade in bulkier and less valuable furs was encouraged in the less remote districts.[136] In addition to these new policies concerning the trade in furs, the Company also became willing to trade in several new items. The trade was expanded to include new types of pelts, oil, fish, quills, feathers, buffalo robes, castorum and walrus ivory.[137]

Attitudes of temperance were also fostered by the Company shortly after the merger. The trade in alcohol was restricted for several reasons. During the period of intense competition, alcohol was used predominantly as an inducement to trade. After the HBC achieved a true monopoly, such measures were no longer as important. A reduction in the amount of alcohol transported into Rupertsland also helped to reduce the costs of transportation in the trade. The space that was previously occupied by alcohol on the brigades could now be filled by other merchandise, more profitable to the Hudson's Bay Company.[138] Finally, as H. Clare Pentland suggested, the spread of

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[135] Judd, "Native labour," 312.
[136] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 326-8.
[137] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 307.
[138] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 306.

temperance attitudes also indicated the spread of industrial capitalist ideals.[139] The ideals of mercantilism were fading in Great Britain and British North America by the nineteenth century and were rapidly being replaced by the ideals of industrial capitalism. This progression would eventually have profound influence on the future of Rupertsland.

As the organization of the fur trade underwent significant restructuring, so too did the employment policies of the Hudson's Bay Company. After 1821, Simpson introduced a hiring practice which was even more heavily influenced by ethnicity. He wished to maintain an even balance between Canadians and Orcadians, with as few Scottish and Irish servants as possible. Simpson believed that the Scottish and Irish servants tended to be disobedient and quarrelsome and often banded together to protest their working conditions. However, this policy had to be revised and made flexible as the Company could not often hire enough competent men from Canada and the Orkney Islands. Often the Company had to look elsewhere to find sufficient numbers of men.[140] This was especially true in Canada where new employment opportunities, such as construction on railroads, canals and other public works, were attracting many of the labourers away from the fur trade.[141]

Governor Simpson also introduced new attitudes towards the men of mixed descent in the trade. Previously, Métis employees of the trading companies had been able to advance in the companies based on their abilities and experience. Simpson, however, regarded the Métis as lazy, disobedient, in need of much regulating and worthy only of the lowest levels of the employment hierarchies. The career opportunities and the status of the Métis men steadily declined after 1821. At the same time, however, Simpson recognized that the Métis could become formidable enemies of the Company and, therefore, continued to hire them on a limited basis and often as a means to control the other European employees.[142]

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[139] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 182.
[140] Judd, "'Mixt Bands,'" 130-4; and, Burley, *Servants*, 96-105.
[141] Judd, "'Mixt Bands,'" 137, 145.
[142] Judd, "Native labour," 310-1; and, Burley, *Servants*, 93.

Aboriginal men also began to experience changes in their employment opportunities. Prior to 1821, the trading companies did not hire Aboriginal men on contract. After 1821, however, as the Hudson's Bay Company faced shortages of readily available labourers, Aboriginal men began to be hired on contract in areas already trapped out. In this way the Company solved some of its labour problems without running the risk of interfering with the trapping season.[143] By 1825, the HBC also began looking towards the Red River settlement as a local labour pool from which to recruit the necessary labourers. The Company was able to hire residents of Red River on a temporary basis as the need arose.[144] Increasingly through the nineteenth century, the HBC was able to support a local labour pool at Red River and gradually reduce the need to cover the social overhead costs of its employees. By the 1860s, personal labour organization was declining in the Rupertsland fur trade, although it would not entirely disappear until well into the twentieth century.

While a steadily increasing settlement at Red River was initially feared and later embraced as a source of labour, it eventually proved to be fatal to the monopoly control of the fur trade by the Hudson's Bay Company. As the settlement at Red River expanded, and the northern United States developed, a growing number of free traders began to establish themselves in the area.[145] There was little the Company could do to end the free trade movement. By 1863, industrial interests in London had gained a controlling interest of the HBC and by 1869, these interests were a predominant influence in the negotiations of the transfer of Rupertsland from the HBC to the Dominion of Canada.[146]

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[143] Judd, "'Mixt Bands,'" 139.
[144] Judd, "'Mixt Bands,'" 138; and, Innis, *Fur Trade*, 309-10.
[145] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 332.
[146] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 338.

Conclusion

The fur trade in Canada was an important part of the history of the country and influenced much of its development both economically, politically and socially. The political and economic organization of New France was heavily influenced by the fur trade conducted along the Great Lakes river system.[147] The fur trade in central Canada was also used to re-affirm political and military alliances that were important during the French — Indian War, through which Britain gained unequivocal control of Canada and the northern United States. The Rupertsland fur trade provided the framework for later Canadian development. As Innis explained, "The geographic unity of Canada which resulted from the fur trade became less noticeable with the introduction of capitalism and the railroads. Her economic development has been one of gradual adjustment of machine industry to the framework incidental to the fur trade."[148] Thus, the economic and political development of Canada owes much of its shape and character to the Rupertsland fur trade and as such, a proper understanding of the economic and labour relations established under the fur trade is important to understanding much of the history of Canada, in particular as it relates to the interaction of the Canadian government with the Aboriginal peoples.

While some scholars have argued that the Canadian fur trade was predominantly a political system, these interpretations seem simplistic in their attempt to explain the trading organization that developed in Rupertsland. While political motivations may have been present among both the European and Aboriginal participants in the Rupertsland trade, the economic motivations outweighed the political ones. Although the Rupertsland fur trade represented more than the expression of a political system, it was not simply a new example of the old, European system of feudalism nor the simple articulation of two modes of production. Unlike under the system of feudalism, the trading companies were not 'landowners' in the true sense of the word. The power that

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[147] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 82.
[148] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 402.

the companies had came from oligopoly control of the Rupertsland fur trade. The companies lacked the direct political authority over the Aboriginal peoples and the ability to enforce any perceived political power.[149] The political and economic conditions necessary for feudalism were simply lacking in the Rupertsland fur trade, even if the personal obligations established between employer and employee in the fur trade resembled those established under feudalistic systems in Europe. In other words, personal obligations were not confined to feudalism and, as such, the existence of such obligations does not presuppose a feudalistic system.

In a similar manner, it is too simplistic to approach the fur trade as a simple articulation of two separate modes of production. As Frank Tough explained:

> The presumption that these economic activities [subsistence and commercial] were completely separated provides no way to consider the unity of production and exchange in the fur trade. A single economy allocated labour time and applied the means of production to generate both life-sustaining subsistence and commercial income.[150]

In other words, if the Rupertsland fur trade was simply the articulation of a European, capitalist mode of production with an Aboriginal, non-capitalist mode, the Aboriginal economy would not have developed an interlocking system of subsistence and commercial sectors after 1670.[151]

Therefore, the Rupertsland fur trade was a form of capitalism. It may not have been the 'classic' form of capitalism represented in Britain after the Industrial Revolution, but then again the economic conditions in Rupertsland were not at all like those found in urban Britain. These differing economic conditions led to a variant form of capitalism, called personal labour organization by H. Clare Pentland. Under this

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[149] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 22; and, Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail,'* 42. One exception might have been the District of Assiniboia. Here, agricultural settlement dictated by formal land grants from the HBC allowed the Company to establish more formal political organizations and exert more control over the residents of the area.

[150] Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail,'* 42.

[151] Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail,'* 42.

system, the motivations of both the European and Aboriginal participants were accommodated, even if there was a lack of understanding between the participants as to the other party's motivations. As Ray and Freeman explained, even though "the English and the Indians did not fully understand each other's attitudes and motivations with respect to property rights, the two groups had worked out a trading procedure and pattern of interpersonal behaviour that accommodated their differences."[152] The Rupertsland fur trade was clearly a capitalistic system that adjusted to accommodate the unique economic conditions it faced.

The system of personal labour organization that developed in the Rupertsland fur trade allowed a form of capitalism to be introduced to an area where the normal economic conditions facilitating capitalism were not present. However, this form of capitalism was not unique to the fur trade, as other early Canadian industries, such as the St. Maurice Forges, also developed this form of labour organization. It was also not unique to Canada. The economic conditions recognized by Pentland as necessary to the development of personal labour organization were also present in northern Australia. Thus, in northern Australia, as in Rupertsland, personal labour organization was developed as a means to promote the successful operation of the cattle industry, which was also dependent on Aboriginal labour, much like the fur trade was in Canada. A detailed examination of personal labour organization in the northern Australian cattle industry is the subject of the next chapter.

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[152] Ray and Freeman, *'Give us Good Measure,'* 59.

Chapter Four: The Northern Australian Cattle Industry, 1885 - 1966

The cattle industry is one of Australia's most successful export industries and it owes much of its success to Aboriginal labour.[1] The unforgiving climate and rough terrain were not always conducive to pastoralism and the Anglo-Australian settlers had much to learn if they hoped to run a successful station. The industry did not, however, utilize Aboriginal labour, and their knowledge of the land, from the very beginning. Historical animosities and fierce Aboriginal resistance to Anglo-Australian encroachment encouraged most station managers to rely upon Anglo-Australian labour sources.[2] But by the early 1870s, Aboriginal labour was well established in the industry for two main reasons. First, the Anglo-Australians had been generally successful in subduing the Aboriginal resistance. Second, gold rushes to the Palmer River and other northern regions, robbed the industry of its much needed labour pool. Generally, as the cattle industry spread further north and further away from Anglo-Australian labour pools, Aboriginal labour became increasingly important in the industry. As Aboriginal labour became more prominent on the cattle stations, economic interdependencies were created and a unique economy that combined elements of both the Anglo-Australian and Aboriginal modes of production developed.

As with the Rupertsland fur trade, some scholars in Australia approach the relationships between cattle station managers and Aboriginal labourers from a predominantly social or political perspective.[3] This approach, however, often excludes some important factors in these relationships that relate to the economic interaction

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[1] Dawn May, *Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry: Queensland from White Settlement to the Present* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1994), 1.
[2] Henry Reynolds, *Frontier: Aborigines, Settlers and Land* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 22.
[3] See for example, Ronald M. Berndt and Catherine H. Berndt, *End of an Era: Aboriginal Labour in the Northern Territory* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1987); Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier* (Ringwood: Penguin Books Australia, 1982); and, Frank Stevens, *Aborigines in the Northern Territory Cattle Industry* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974).

between these two groups of people. The pastoralists in northern Australia were engaged in an economic (and commercial) activity. They hired Aboriginal people to work on their stations as a readily available source of inexpensive labour. Therefore, in order to completely understand the cattle industry and the Anglo-Australian — Aboriginal labour relations established in it, it is important to approach the station operations as an economic system and not focus solely on the social and political aspects of the industry.

The Organization of the Northern Australian Cattle Industry

Settlement and economic expansion into Australia's northern regions, especially the Northern Territory, was gradual and sporadic. Most economic industries were small in scale due to the region's geographic isolation, extreme seasonality and the locations of its natural resources. The industries were especially affected by the isolation as it meant that markets were limited and transportation and labour costs were high.[4] The most successful enterprises involved either a scarce supply of the end product, nationally or internationally, so that market price far exceeded the cost of production (for example mining, pearling and the trade in crocodile skins and buffalo hides), or else the resources needed for production were available in the north for a lesser cost than elsewhere (for example, the availability of inexpensive Aboriginal labour in the cattle industry).[5]

Even though it was eventually to become one of the most viable industries in northern Australia, pastoral expansion in Queensland did not begin until 1840.[6] It had an even later start in the Northern Territory, not beginning until the 1880s.[7] While

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[4] Ciaran O'Faircheallaigh, *The Northern Territory Economy: Growth and Structure 1965-1985* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1987), 1.
[5] O'Faircheallaigh, *Northern Territory Economy*, 1.
[6] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 24.
[7] O'Faircheallaigh, *Northern Territory Economy*, 14.

Aboriginal resistance to European expansion created numerous economic setbacks for the pastoralists, it also created difficulties in hiring European workers. Additionally, distance, isolation and poor working conditions did not encourage employment. Station managers rarely made improvements on their property as building material was expensive and difficult to procure and in an industry with typically high rates of investment and low returns, they chose to use their capital in other areas.[8] Poor communication systems created even more problems. Telegraph services were not available in northern Australia until the early 1870s and "other means of communications were extremely primitive."[9] It could take months before news of employment opportunities in one area reached another. The most critical factor that inhibited the supply of European labour, however, was the fear of Aboriginal attacks, especially during the 1860s. Even though most Aboriginal attacks were against livestock and not humans, the stories of frontier violence that reached the more settled areas of the south created horrific images and became a major deterrent for many would be labourers.[10] Even though Aboriginal people could have supplied the much needed labour resources, prejudice and their own war of resistance kept them off the stations.

The cattle industry also suffered in the early years because of a very limited market. Transportation of beef was difficult over such large distances, and in the international arena Australia was competing with Argentina for the lucrative British market. Argentina usually came out ahead for a number of reasons, not the least of which was a more convenient shipping route.[11] Limited markets did not, however, prevent pastoral expansion into some of the more remote areas. As F.H. Bauer

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[8] Dawn May, *From Bush to Station: Aboriginal Labour in the North Queensland Pastoral Industry 1861-1897* (Townsville: James Cook University Press, 1983), 36; and, Jeannie Gunn, *We of the Never-Never* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1907), 43, 55-7, 74-5, 96-7.

[9] May, *From Bush to Station*, 34; and, F. H. Bauer, *Historical Geography of White Settlement in Part of Northern Australia: Part 2 — The Katherine - Darwin Region*, Divisional Report No. 64/1 (Canberra: Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization — Division of Land Research and Regional Survey, 1964), 69-77.

[10] May, *From Bush to Station*, 35; and, Bauer, *Historical Geography*, 141.

[11] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 1; and, L.A. Riddett, *Kine, Kin and Country: The Victoria River District of the Northern Territory 1911-1966* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1990), 33.

explained for the Katherine - Darwin region of the Northern Territory:

> The expansion of the pastoral industry into the Northern Territory, particularly the Far North, appears to have been made with little or no thought of the markets which would absorb the pastoral products. In this of course, the Territory differed not at all from the Queensland Gulf or from any one of many other pastoral areas of Australia. Australian pastoralists have always pushed into new areas simply because there was land to be had, and if they gave any thought to markets it was with the simple conviction that you had to raise your beast before you could sell it and that markets would be there when needed. By and large, this has been a successful philosophy ...[12]

By the 1870s, new markets were indeed opening in Australia's north in relation to the demands of the southern metropolis.

One such new, local market was created by the discovery of gold in the Palmer River region in 1874 which brought many prospectors to the north. Other gold fields in both Queensland and the Northern Territory had similar effects, and growing towns, such as Darwin in the Northern Territory, provided steady markets. By the mid 1880s, new markets in the East Indies and the Far East began to show promise, but at least initially, the local markets proved to be the most important.[13] Ironically, just as they created new markets, the gold rushes also drained the cattle industry of its already limited labour supply.[14] The labour situation in the gold fields was such that by 1874, mining companies were requesting labour support from the government. Labour shortages on the gold fields meant that wages were kept high;[15] the cattle stations simply could not compete effectively for Anglo-Australian labour. Even as the gold fields depleted, the mining industry began to increase in importance. The cattle industry still could not compete for Anglo-Australian labour.[16]

The initial response of the station managers was to turn to immigrant labour.

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[12] Bauer, *Historical Geography*, 118.
[13] Bauer, *Historical Geography*, 118.
[14] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 31.
[15] Bauer, *Historical Geography*, 84.
[16] May, *From Bush to Station*, 41.

Most of the British and other European immigrants, however, landed in Brisbane and other southern ports and chose to remain there. This situation had much to do with the fact that favourable land policies in Canada and the United States attracted rural British immigrants to these countries. Most British immigrants to Australia had urban connections and, therefore, remained in the cities.[17] Even those immigrants who landed in the northern ports generally did not stay in the north or else were considered unsuitable for pastoral work.[18]

As time wore on, pastoralists desperately needed a new source of labour. Therefore, many managers began encouraging Aboriginal men to come and live and work at the stations in exchange for a supply of beef and peace. In other words, due to a serious shortage in labour, the employers were now willing not only to employ Aboriginal labourers, but to also cover their social overhead costs. By the 1870s, Aboriginal labour was commonly being exploited on the pastoral stations. However, labour shortages were still a problem until the 1880s. As Dawn May explained:

> Until the 1880s great difficulty was experienced in obtaining an adequate supply of labour throughout the north. Squatters considered their European employees expensive and often hard to manage. Imported coloured labour was cheaper and more docile but its use was politically contentious and aggravated the precarious relationship between labour and capital. By contrast, Aboriginal workers were accessible and cheap yet did not attract the political controversy associated with imported labour. However Aboriginal labour had its own unique problems.[19]

After so many years of fierce resistance and violence, the 'letting in' process took time. However, by 1886 it was estimated that Aboriginal people constituted over half the employees on northern cattle stations.[20] As Ann McGrath commented, "Aborigines comprised the majority of station residents. A few dozen Asians, a couple of hundred

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[17] May, *From Bush to Station*, 117.
[18] May, *From Bush to Station*, 38.
[19] May, *From Bush to Station*, 50.
[20] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 45.

Europeans and at least 400 Aborigines resided at the average station camp."[21] Clearly Aboriginal labour had become an integral component of the northern cattle industry.

'Letting in' (in other words, hiring Aboriginal labourers) provided two basic advantages for the station managers. In the short term, station stock was generally no longer being hunted by Aboriginal men. These men were often given rations as part of their terms of employment and, therefore, did not have to hunt cattle to feed their families in areas where wild game was depleted. In the long term, and most importantly, the managers gained a steady supply of inexpensive labour. While letting in was the most common method of obtaining Aboriginal labour, there were other methods. The Native Mounted Police were known to 'hand over' Aboriginal people that they had arrested to station managers.[22] In more remote areas, the station managers themselves often went out to 'round-up' Aboriginal workers. In these regions, both the Anglo-Australian and the Aboriginal populations were more sparse and, therefore, Aboriginal people did not often offer their labour skills to the stations. The remote areas were also settled *after* the 1870s when there was already a labour shortage. Additionally, due to limited numbers of police in the area, managers were virtually free in their dealings with Aboriginal people.[23] Therefore, while many Aboriginal people may have voluntarily offered their labour to the cattle stations, others were given no choice.

Eventually, the station managers discovered that there were a number of advantages to using Aboriginal labour. The Aboriginal peoples formed a local labour pool (as compared to the previous non-Aboriginal labour pool that was based in the south). This development was especially important during the gold rushes and when considering the seasonality of the work involved. Some of the Aboriginal people,

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[21] Ann McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle:' Aborigines in Cattle Country* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 27.

[22] The Native Mounted Police was the infamous frontier police force composed of Aboriginal troopers and Anglo-Australian officers.

[23] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 42-3.

especially the fully initiated men, were quite willing to work on the stations.[24] Although this willingness was often misinterpreted by Anglo-Australians, Dawn May suggested that it was because working on the stations would allow these men continued access to the land, an access which was only granted to employees of the stations but was important to the Aboriginal religion, culture and worldview.[25] Another advantage to Aboriginal labour was that it was inexpensive. In other words, little or no cash wages had to be paid to the Aboriginal workers, which proved especially important in the remote areas where returns tended to be low while costs were high.[26] The managers paid their Aboriginal employees mainly with material goods such as food, clothing, a place to live and sometimes tobacco. Finally, the traditional skills of the Aboriginal people were readily adaptable to the cattle industry; in particular, they were skilled at tracking stray cattle and, when there were excursions into the bush, they proved adept at preventing the group from becoming lost and finding food and water sources if the provisions were depleted.[27]

On the other hand, the station managers also found disadvantages to using Aboriginal labour. Some of the comments made by many station managers were: the Aboriginal people were unreliable; they did not have a European work ethic; and, they needed to be supervised continuously.[28] Such complaints may have been completely fictitious and used to justify the low wages paid, a misunderstanding of the traditional

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[24] In Aboriginal society, men were initiated into various stages of education throughout their childhood and young adulthood. Fully initiated men were those men who had completed these various stages of education and were now considered adults in Aboriginal society. Peggy Rockman Napaljarri and Lee Cataldi (eds.), *Warlpiri Dreamings and Histories: Newly Recorded Stories from the Aboriginal Elders of Central Australia* (New South Wales: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), xvii.

[25] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 52.

[26] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 53. Comparatively low wages were not uncommon to industries using personal labour organization. The wages of the employees of the St. Maurice Forges in Canada were at most two thirds of other employees in New France. H. C. Pentland, "The Development of a Capitalistic Labour Market in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* Nov. (1959), 455.

[27] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 53-5.

[28] Ewan Morris, "'Like the Bends in an Old Tree'? Aboriginal Workers and White Pastoralists on Victoria River Downs Station, 1930 – 1965," (B.A. (Honours) Thesis, Australian National University, 1990), 29; Stevens, *Aborigines*, 141; 146-7; and, Commonwealth of Australia, "The Report of the Committee to Review the Situation of Aborigines on Pastoral Properties in the Northern Territory," December 1971, 62.

Aboriginal method of making a task fit the length of a day instead of completing it as quickly as possible as is the European standard, or else were evidence of acts of Aboriginal resistance misunderstood by the Anglo-Australian cattlemen.[29] Often the labourers' work output was directly related to their treatment by the Anglo-Australian staff.[30] Illiteracy among Aboriginal workers also created problems. These workers were not promoted to management positions nor were they relied upon to estimate herd sizes or cut a certain number of cattle as they did not count according to the Anglo-Australian standards.[31] Despite these problems, station managers continued to acknowledge their need of Aboriginal labour and knowledge of the country.

It was generally beneficial for station managers to encourage the retention of at least some traditional Aboriginal knowledge and skills, such as their knowledge of the country and skills related to tracking and finding water and bush food. As well, the nature of the cattle industry, which moved between periods of extreme labour and idleness, was not conducive to a rigid application of European concepts of time, such as working only eight hours a day, five days a week. The Aboriginal labourers did not generally have such a rigid concept of time and were, therefore, willing to work as long as it took to complete a task. Most station managers did nothing to change this attitude.[32]

While some Aboriginal people willingly chose to enter station life to maintain access to traditional lands or to acquire European technology, not all did. Some managed to live in the bush for long periods of time with only brief contact with kin and friends on stations. Others were forced into station life through Native Mounted Police or settler "round-ups" or because they saw no other option as their world was being rapidly transformed through disease, violence and European technology.[33] No matter how they came to be employed on cattle stations, however, the Aboriginal people

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[29] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 103.
[30] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 247.
[31] May, *From Bush to Station*, 63.
[32] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 102.
[33] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 22; and, Reynolds, *The Other Side*, 171.

maintained their close connections to friends, family and the land, both on the station and off.[34] As Ann McGrath explained, "'Coming in' to stations meant many things to Aboriginal people, but it never meant total acceptance or submission to the Australian colonial culture which introduced cattle stations onto their land. It did not imply a rejection of their bush lifestyle, for they never became truly sedentary."[35] The Aboriginal people began to successfully combine aspects of both their traditional lifestyles and the European labour market into a unique mixed economy.

The cattle stations in the Northern Territory and Queensland were often vast properties. The climate and physical geography of northern Australia meant that in order for a station to encompass enough suitable grazing areas, it had to cover a considerable tract of land.[36] The size of cattle stations often meant that the homesteads (the houses of the managers and their wives) were several days travel from the closest urban community.[37] The northern climate included two basic seasons — the wet and the dry. During the wet season, from late December to March, most travel and work was suspended.[38] Stations were often completely isolated for the duration of the wet, receiving no visitors, mail or supplies for two to three months. As such, the cattle stations often became their own separate communities with unique social and labour relationships established between the Anglo-Australian and Aboriginal residents.

Generally, work on the northern cattle stations coincided with the two seasons. During the dry season, roughly eight to ten months from May to December, active work with the cattle herds was completed. Stockworkers were involved in mustering, branding, spaying and butchering.[39] The remaining two to four months during the wet season were devoted to general maintenance and station improvements. For example,

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[34] Riddett, *Kine, Kin and Country*, 72.
[35] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 20.
[36] For example, Brunette Downs in the Northern Territory, considered by many pastoralists to be a smaller property, covered some 4730 square miles. Stevens, *Aborigines*, 105.
[37] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 104.
[38] Bauer, *Historical Geography*, 13.
[39] On southern stations, these activities only took place for about two months of the year. Stevens, *Aborigines*, 112.

workers were engaged in constructing buildings, erecting fences and making any necessary repairs to existing structures. During this 'off-season' most men were not expected to work on Sundays; however, when the cattle needed to be worked, the men were engaged seven days a week.[40] While the women on the stations were kept busy during the dry season, there was little for them to do during the wet. Those women married to managers often cured their boredom and frustration by vacationing in the south for the entire season; such vacations were luxuries that few other women could afford.[41]

When cattle work was at its peak, the stockworkers were engaged for virtually all of the daylight hours. Breakfast was usually served between 6:00 and 6:30 AM; the kitchen staff, of course, began their day even earlier to prepare the breakfast for the stockworkers.[42] Except for a two hour lunch break during the hottest time of the day, the stockworkers laboured from dawn until the head stockman called a halt for the day, usually after the sun had set. It was not uncommon for all stockmen, Anglo-Australian and Aboriginal alike, to work fourteen hours a day during the dry season.[43]

Aboriginal workers comprised the majority of residents on cattle stations, and, therefore, they were also responsible for many of the tasks that needed to be completed. Aboriginal men were involved in stock work, which included mustering, droving, branding and breaking-in horses. As well, they were often responsible for butchering cattle, cutting timber, repairing fences, transporting supplies and even delivering mail. While Aboriginal men were rarely given positions of greater authority than Anglo-Australian workers, at times when few Anglo-Australians could be employed, men of mixed descent were sometimes promoted as high as head stockman.[44]

Traditional Aboriginal skills often proved to be an asset to stock work. Hunting skills such as tracking, keeping down wind and mimicking animal noises transferred

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[40] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 112.
[41] Riddett, *Kine, Kin and Country*, 107.
[42] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 109.
[43] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 110.
[44] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 32-3.

easily to stock work and an "intimate knowledge of the land, its waterholes, rocky outcrops, hills and flood plains proved crucial in cattle management."[45] Most station managers only grudgingly accepted the obvious skills of the Aboriginal stockmen. However some, like William Chatfield Junior (a Queensland station manager) who wrote to the *Queenslander* on June 27, 1874, readily admitted the importance of Aboriginal labour. Chatfield also expressed in his letter the widespread belief that the Aboriginal people were a 'dying race':

> had it not been for the aborigines doing nearly all my work during the late rush to the Palmer, while white labour was not to be had, my losses would have been ruinous ... There is little doubt that the doom of the race is utter extermination within the next fifty years, wherever brought into contact with Europeans, but in the meantime, if properly treated, they may do 'the state some service,' and are not the utterly useless, lazy, treacherous people some persons would have us believe.[46]

Clearly, Aboriginal labour was crucial to the success of the industry in northern Australia.

Even though the station managers were largely unwilling to admit their reliance upon and respect towards Aboriginal labourers, it would seem that the Aboriginal people already knew their importance to the industry. Bill Laurie, a mixed descent stockman working in the early twentieth century, commented that "like they said they could do without them, but I've never seen a place yet that could do without boys [Aboriginal stock workers]. All the stations two or three years ago were coming from a long way looking for boys, to take them away from here. They must be some use to the stations if they chase them, ain't it?"[47] Anglo-Australians demonstrated the importance of Aboriginal labour by continuing to hire them and even actively seeking their service.

Usually it is the Aboriginal men who are remembered for their critical

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[45] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 45.
[46] In W. Ross Johnston (ed.), *A Documentary History of Queensland* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1988), 88.
[47] Bruce Shaw (ed.), *When the Dust Come in Between* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1992), 103.

contributions to station work. However, the women also played important roles. Some Aboriginal women helped with the stock work but most performed tasks around the head-station. Domestic work included cooking, cleaning, sewing, polishing silver, washing dishes and clothes and other menial tasks.[48] While many of the settlers, holding to their Victorian ideals that women's work was not worthy of mention, refused to admit the important roles performed by Aboriginal women, J. W. Bleakley, Chief Protector of Queensland from 1914 to 1942, was not afraid to quietly point out the importance of Aboriginal women. Bleakley argued that Anglo-Australian station workers would not have survived without the aid of Aboriginal women, especially where no Anglo-Australian women lived. As Bleakley explained:

> the lubra is one of the greatest of the pioneers of the [Northern] Territories, for without her it would have been impossible for the white man to have carried on, especially where conditions were practically impossible for a white woman, and even where, as in the towns or in places in touch with civilization, the white woman has braved the climate and other discomforts, the lubra has still been indispensable to make life possible for her.[49]

Even while many did not want to admit their reliance upon the work of Aboriginal women, the women were an important part of station life.

Many Anglo-Australians believed that domestic training was an important way in which Aboriginal women could be 'uplifted' from their previous state. In order to achieve this proper 'uplifting,' many Aboriginal girls were raised at the head-station (even to the point of being forcibly removed from their mothers) and introduced to domestic chores at a young age.[50] While Aboriginal women had to learn many new domestic skills to meet European standards of etiquette, they also introduced many traditional Aboriginal skills to the stations as well; in particular, they introduced skills in

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[48] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 50.
[49] J. W. Bleakley, "Report on the Aboriginals and Half-castes of Central Australia and Northern Australia, 1928," *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers* No. 21 (1929), 7. The term 'lubra' was used to describe Aboriginal women in northern Australia, often in a derogatory manner.
[50] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 59-60.

midwifery and in healing.[51] Unfortunately, there were many times when the social barriers constructed by Anglo-Australian women prevented the exchange of valuable knowledge and help, even at times when professional Anglo-Australian medical help was miles away.[52]

It was not uncommon for European women to entrust Aboriginal women with the care of their children, especially the boys. In this way, many young Anglo-Australian men learned traditional Aboriginal skills, such as tracking and hunting, as well as stock work.[53] Some children were also taught Aboriginal languages, stories and worldviews. However, too much knowledge of the Aboriginal way of life often made the European mothers fear that their children were "'moving into' the black culture."[54] Therefore, Aboriginal women often worked hard to find an agreeable middle ground.

In addition to their economic roles, Aboriginal women also performed sexual services, especially on stations run be single men. If the station manager had an Anglo-Australian wife, the Aboriginal women's sexual duties were either eliminated or went underground.[55] Sexual abuse and rape was commonplace, even among girls as young as eleven or twelve.[56] Usually the sexual relationships between European men and Aboriginal women were very casual or consisted of several brief encounters over an extended period of time. In these relationships, the men usually believed that their duties to the women (and any children that they might father) ended when payment for the sexual service was made. A few relationships developed into informal marriages, but these were rare and often ended when the man found a more suitable European wife.[57] While some long-term relationships were maintained, these relationships were often kept secret as popular opinion could be devastating to a man labeled as a

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[51] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 63.
[52] Riddett, *Kine, Kin and Country*, 115.
[53] Riddett, *Kine, Kin and Country*, 116.
[54] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle.'* 63.
[55] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 50.
[56] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 50.
[57] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 68-9; and, Stevens, *Aborigines*, 134.

'combo.'[58] The sexual services performed by the Aboriginal women on the stations resulted in the creation of a significant mixed descent population in northern Australia.

While it would be easy to consider only the social relationships present on the northern cattle stations, this perspective would exclude the important labour relations that affected the social interaction on the stations. As such, it is necessary to consider the economic conditions faced by the northern pastoralists and their responses to these conditions in order to clearly understand the interaction between Anglo-Australian and Aboriginal people in Australia's north.

The Economic Conditions in Northern Australia, 1885 - 1966

The 1880s were a time when both labourers and employers were scarce in Australia's northern frontier — the Northern Territory and Queensland. The station managers desperately needed a competent and inexpensive source of labour, while the Aboriginal people needed to secure safe access to their traditional lands and were interested in obtaining some of the European commodities.[59] In both cases, the concerned parties had only limited options in which to achieve their goals. H. Clare Pentland argued that when such a situation occurs, employers are encouraged to assume the social overhead costs of their labourers. In other words, the employer provides more than just wages. He also provides food, clothing, necessary tools, and other such provisions that will allow an employee to work comfortably and provide for his or her family. As was discussed previously, Pentland called these particular economic relations personal labour organization.[60]

Even though Pentland was writing about Canadian industries, his theory can be applied to Australia, especially since both countries were colonized by Britain under

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[58] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 71.
[59] May, *From Bush to Station*, 67; and, Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 5-6.
[60] H. Clare Pentland, *Labour and Capital in Canada, 1650 - 1860*, ed. Paul Phillips (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1981), 24-5.

similar ideals of commercial capitalism. More importantly, the same conditions that Pentland described in the fur trade in Canada, can also be found in northern Australia's cattle industry. Much like in the Rupertsland fur trade, a scarcity of labourers in the cattle industry was created in two main ways. First, the cattle stations in the north were far removed from most Anglo-Australian centres. As a result, it often proved difficult for station managers to attract and retain reliable Anglo-Australian labourers. This situation worsened when, first, the gold rushes and, later, the mining industry offered more lucrative work contracts than did the cattle industry. 'Coloured' labourers, generally Melanesian and Oriental people imported to Australia as labourers, were politically contentious and were often considered to have an inferior skill level for work on the stations.[61] As such, by the mid 1880s, Aboriginal labour was virtually the only viable source of labour for the remote station managers if they wished to turn a profit.

The cattle stations also required skilled labour which created a scarcity of labour sources. The pastoral industry required an extensive knowledge of caring for cattle, riding horses and the land on which the station was located. Many station managers complained of the poor working skills of many Anglo-Australian, Melanesian and Chinese labourers. On the other hand, the traditional skills of the Aboriginal people transferred easily to station work. As was discussed previously, the Aboriginal men's ability to track animals and their knowledge of the geography, climate and vegetation of the northern regions was indispensable to the successful operation of a station.[62] Additionally, Anglo-Australian employees did not always remain on stations for long periods of time. This high rate of turn-over further emphasized the need for Aboriginal knowledge of the land. As Frank Stevens explained, "Given the vast size of most of the Northern Territory cattle stations the turnover of whites was a critical factor in their

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[61] This practice of importing Melanesian and Oriental labourers was often considered contrary to the "White Australia" policy and, therefore, raised concerns among many southern Anglo-Australians officials. May, *From Bush to Station*, 50.

[62] J. W. Bleakley, *Aborigines of Australia: Their History — Their Habits — Their Assimilation* (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1961), 320; May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 53-5, 82; and, McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle'*, 45.

continued employment. Until the person knew the station's geography he was highly dependent on the Aborigines for guidance in any work that was carried out away from the homestead."[63] The remoteness of the cattle stations and the need for skilled labour created dependence on Aboriginal labourers.

This reliance on Aboriginal labour allowed the Aboriginal workers the ability to interfere with the stations' production by working at an inferior level or leaving the station entirely.[64] Some station managers complained that Aboriginal labourers handled stock poorly, but these complaints seem to come from stations where the Aboriginal people were treated poorly. It would seem reasonable, then, that these complaints arose, at least in part, from situations of poor working conditions when any labourer would work well below capacity.[65] Aboriginal women performing domestic duties on the station could also interfere with productivity by working poorly or slowly or stealing.[66] Work on the stations was disrupted even when Aboriginal workers simply assumed attitudes of sullen malevolence towards the station managers.[67] Disturbances in the daily routines of the stations had immediate and serious impacts on the success of the industry.

The station managers enjoyed a degree of monopoly as the cattle industry was virtually the only employment option for Aboriginal people, especially those groups living in the interior of the northern regions. If the Aboriginal people wished to remain on their traditional lands and not move to a new region, they often had only a limited number of stations from which to seek employment.[68] Additionally, the policy of land tenure in the Northern Territory, which focused on vast leasehold properties, allowed

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[63] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 139.
[64] Bleakley, *Aborigines of Australia*, 16; and, Ann McGrath, "'Spinifex Fairies:' Aboriginal Workers in the Northern Territory, 1911-39," in *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978* (Australia: Fontana Books, 1980), 242.
[65] May, *From Bush to Station*, 62.
[66] McGrath, "'Spinifex Fairies,'" 242.
[67] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 177.
[68] However, it must be noted that not all Aboriginal people voluntarily sought employment. Some were induced to work through violence and efforts to 'round-up' Aboriginal people for work. May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 43, 95-6; and, McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 22.

over one quarter of the rural lands in the Territory to be leased to only six companies by the mid 1930s.[69] As such, this policy also limited the number of potential employers whom Aboriginal people could approach for employment opportunities.

As with the Rupertsland fur trade, oligopoly is perhaps the most accurate term to describe this situation. The high operating costs of the cattle stations, as well as their remote locations, prevented direct competition for labourers between stations and promoted stable and generally uniform wages across the northern frontier.[70] Without the competition of several neighbouring stations, managers did not have to concern themselves with offering competitive wages, more rations or higher quality living conditions. This degree of oligopoly control gave station managers the ability to cover the social overhead costs of their Aboriginal employees continuously, even though their labour was generally only required on a seasonal basis.

Due to the serious shortage of labour, station managers could not afford to lose their Aboriginal employees and, therefore, had to use incentives other than the threat of dismissal to obtain satisfactory work from their employees. Much like in the fur trade, those Aboriginal workers who conformed to the Anglo-Australian ideals of work behaviour received special concessions and gifts as incentive. Some stations allowed the most respected Aboriginal employees to work in the gardens and receive some of the produce. Aboriginal women were sometimes given beads or old clothes while Aboriginal men were given guns for hunting or 'pocket money' for good work behaviour. On some of the most remote stations, where government authorities could not enforce prohibition, addictive substances, particularly opium or alcohol, were used to bind Aboriginal employees to the stations.[71] Good workers were generally allowed the most freedom to go on walkabouts during the wet season and to continue practicing various aspects of their traditional culture. At times when Anglo-Australian workers

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[69] Riddett, *Kine, Kin and Country*, 26.
[70] Harry W. Richardson, *Regional Economics: Location Theory, Urban Structure, and Regional Change* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 33.
[71] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 47.

were particularly scarce, respected Aboriginal employees would receive promotions and greater responsibility around the station.[72]

As well as using positive incentives to encourage desired work behaviours from their Aboriginal employees, the stations managers and the government also worked in cooperation to prevent Aboriginal employees from simply quitting their jobs if the working conditions were less than ideal. For example, it was illegal under the *Wards Employment Ordinance* for an Aboriginal employee to 'leave his lawful employment.' Additionally, as Frank Stevens explained, "it was a commonly accepted policy amongst employers that they would not poach each other's employees."[73] This informal policy was an aspect of the oligopoly control enjoyed by the pastoralists that encouraged the stations to keep wages low in an economy where returns on investments were also low. In this economic atmosphere, the stations simply could not afford to offer competitive wages; therefore, all stations worked together to keep wages low. Finally, station managers of major companies were often instructed not to hire staff who had worked on other properties in case they had been let go because of a dispute.[74] Clearly an Aboriginal employee who was fired or quit his job would have a difficult time finding a new job on a different station. Aboriginal employees were, therefore, 'encouraged' to work towards the expectations of their station managers if they wished to remain employed in the cattle industry at all.

The four economic conditions identified by Pentland as necessary for the development of personal labour organization — a scarcity of labourers, the ability of labourers to interfere with production, a degree of employer monopoly and the use of positive incentives as motivation for the work force — were faced by the pastoralists in northern Australia. Additionally, the station managers required skilled labour, one of the conditions that Pentland argued encouraged personal labour organization to develop more quickly. Generally, however, employment in the cattle industry, much like in the

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[72] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 33.
[73] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 146.
[74] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 146.

fur trade, was seasonal, not continuous. Regardless of this fact, Aboriginal workers often returned to the same station year after year and the station managers introduced personal labour organization as the most viable means of operating a profitable cattle station in northern Australia.

Personal Labour Organization in the Northern Australian Cattle Industry

Pentland argued that when an employer uses personal labour organization in his daily operations, he accepts the responsibility of carrying the social overhead costs of his employees. As was discussed in a previous chapter, carrying the employees' social overhead costs was a means of preserving the labour force in an environment where labourers were scarce. In the cattle industry, the cost of commodities offered for sale in the station stores was extremely high due to the remoteness of most stations. As a result, most Aboriginal employees were not paid enough to sustain themselves and their families on their wages alone. Additionally, wild game and indigenous plant food were severally depleted in the regions directly connected to the stations, preventing Aboriginal employees from supplementing their income with 'bush food' to an acceptable degree. Therefore, to prevent their much needed Aboriginal employees from leaving the stations and seeking work elsewhere, station managers developed several ways to cover the social overhead costs of their employees.

One way by which these costs were covered was by paying Aboriginal workers in kind — in food, clothing and shelter.[75] Wages were determined by each station manager independently and could, therefore, vary widely among the different stations although usually not to the extent that one station would begin attracting labourers from other stations. Cash wages were sometimes paid on the station ledgers but food and other supplies were automatically subtracted so that few, if any, Aboriginal workers

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[75] McGrath, "'Spinifex Fairies,'" 254; and, C.D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society: Aboriginal Policy and Practice -- Volume I* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970), 275.

received cash for their labour.[76] Managers gave a number of excuses for paying such low wages to Aboriginal workers. For example, the managers argued that they were exposing the Aboriginal workers to 'civilization' and Aborigines, who were not 'in the habit of acquiring personal property,' did not have to be paid much at all. Cash wages, it was argued, would be spent buying alcohol for unemployed relatives; as such, paying in kind was, in the end, better for the worker.[77] While these excuses were an easy way to justify the conditions of employment on the stations to southern Australians, in reality the practice of paying in kind with only minimal, or even no, cash wages was probably a convenient means for the station managers to assume the social overhead costs of their employees. The Aboriginal workers were given directly everything they needed to participate in the cattle industry and provide adequately for their dependents. Additionally, paying in kind meant that large amounts of capital were unnecessary which was important in remote, rural areas.

While on some stations the quantity and quality of food and shelter provided was poor or even inadequate according to some standards, Dawn May suggested that by the late nineteenth century, "the physical condition of permanently employed station blacks was better than that of blacks leading a traditional lifestyle in the bush."[78] This situation can be partially explained by the fact that by this time most of the able hunters were already working on the stations and no longer living on the land in a traditional manner. However, it was also in the best interests of the station managers, economically speaking, to keep their Aboriginal employees in good physical condition so that they could continue working at their maximum capacity. Furthermore, Ann McGrath suggested that it was generally only Anglo-Australians who were appalled by the condition of the Aboriginal camps.[79] Most Aboriginal people of the time expressed

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[76] May, *From Bush to Station*, 58.
[77] May, *From Bush to Station*, 56; and, Morris, "Aboriginal Workers," 28.
[78] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 49.
[79] See for example, Commonwealth of Australia, "Report of the Committee," 51-4.

comfort on the stations, arguing that life in the bush was much more difficult.[80] By this time, Aboriginal labourers were becoming increasingly more skilled while the readily available non-Aboriginal labour force was steadily diminishing.[81]

Perhaps one of the most common complaints made by station managers concerned the Aboriginal camps and the many unemployed Aboriginal people who lived on the pastoral properties. At times, the number of dependents supported by the pastoralists could be significant. For example, between 1952 and 1953, the Wave Hill Station employed 126 Aboriginal people and supported 99 dependents. In the same period, the Victoria River Downs Station employed 116 Aboriginal people and supported 44 dependents. The Lake Nash Station, during those years, employed 33 Aboriginal people while supporting 37 dependents.[82] Many of the managers believed that it was the government's responsibility, not their own, to provide for the extended family of the Aboriginal workers; therefore, they resented the Aboriginal camps on their property.[83] However, no matter how many complaints were made in this regard by station managers, virtually none of the managers chose to forcibly remove the unemployed Aboriginal people from the station camps. There are two main reasons that help to explain these actions. First, allowing the extended families to remain in tact probably encouraged the retention of many of the traditional skills and knowledge that were so important to the successful operation of a station. Had the extended family been removed, Aboriginal station workers may have begun to adopt Anglo-Australian work ethics, much to the detriment of the labour skills required in the industry.

The second reason for allowing extended family members to continue living in

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[80] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 122. Although it must also be remembered that the Aboriginal people may have been simply expressing sentiments that they felt their oppressors wished to hear.
[81] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 122.
[82] For these statistics, employees included both male and female Aboriginal people and the dependents included both adults and children. Even though by 1953 some pastoral stations were receiving government assistance for the care of dependents, similar numbers of employees and dependents would have been supported solely by the pastoralists prior to such government intervention. Australian Archives, A 452/1, "Aboriginals Employed and Dependants [sic] Maintained by Native Affairs Branch on Pastoral Properties, Financial Year 1952-53," 1-2.
[83] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 48.

the station camps was the simple fact that if the station managers did not continue this practice, the Aboriginal labourers would also leave. In other words, many station managers accepted the expense of caring for the relatives of their Aboriginal employees in order to encourage employee stability.[84] Furthermore, some of the contemporaries of the time recognized that the Aboriginal employees were mainly the young men responsible for providing the requisite hunting and other labour needed to ensure the survival of their families.[85] As a characteristic of personal labour organization, the station managers had to provide enough wages (in this case, provided most often in the form of food and shelter) to allow these men to continue meeting the needs of not only their immediate families but also their extended families and clans. In other words, the station managers had to assume the social overhead costs of their employees and their employees' extended kin, a much broader social group than that normally associated with wage labour. If they did not, it is most likely that many labourers would have left the stations. The Aboriginal camps allowed the managers an easy opportunity to cover these costs.

The dependents of Aboriginal employees were more directly cared for by most station managers as well. Often rations were provided once a week for families of the employees.[86] Discarded clothing was at times donated to the residents of the Aboriginal camp. The domestic servants were usually allowed to take any left over food home to their families after they had prepared meals and sometimes extra produce from the garden was given to Aboriginal employees.[87] As the members of one committee commented:

> [the pastoralist accepted the] onerous role of unpaid welfare establishment – providing "first aid" type of medical care, giving infant and maternal welfare guidance, helping with children's education, cashing cheques, providing goods

[84] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 101.
[85] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 48.
[86] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 131.
[87] McGrath, "'Spinifex Fairies,'" 255; and, Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 71-2.

> from the station store on favourable terms, assisting with social service claims, supervising the hygiene and cleanliness of the Aborigines' camp and so on.[88]

Clearly, the pastoralists were accepting responsibilities over their employees and the employees' dependents which were far more complex than those accepted by most wage employers in a capitalist system.

Even though most Aboriginal employees worked only during the dry season, the station managers continued to cover the social overhead costs during the wet season. As Jimmy Larkin, an Aboriginal stockman, explained, "We had to work on the cattle stations but they had to feed us when we had a holiday ... They had to feed us to keep us there. We'd be there when the work started, you know."[89] The station managers continued to provide rations to their employees during the wet season in exchange for a commitment from the Aboriginal employees that they would return for work when they were next needed.

Additionally, station managers and Aboriginal workers began to incorporate walkabouts into the station routine.[90] If an Aboriginal stockman left the station during the busy season, he would find a suitable replacement before he left. Station managers encouraged their Aboriginal labourers to go on walkabout during the slack season when station income was low. Some managers even helped their Aboriginal employees travel to popular gathering spots, such as Borroloola on the Gulf of Carpentaria or areas on the Victoria River Downs property. Encouraging the Aboriginal people to leave at this time was convenient for the station management. Often the maintenance work conducted during these months required specialized skills, such as carpentry and electrical knowledge, that many Aboriginal people did not have. As such, walkabouts during the wet season allowed the station management to reduce their costs in supporting the

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[88] Commonwealth of Australia, "Report on the Committee," 63.

[89] In Bill Rosser, *Up Rode the Troopers: The Black Police in Queensland* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990), 17.

[90] In Aboriginal society, the term walkabout refers to a spiritual and ceremonial activity in which clan members re-affirm their connections to the sacred places that are under their care. Walkabouts generally involve a lengthy trek across the outback of Australia following the travels of various Dreamtime figures. Napaljarri and Cataldi, *Warlpiri Dreamings and Histories*, xvii-xviii.

Aboriginal workers and their dependents when they were not needed for work.[91] Walkabouts also improved the employer - employee relationships and the Aboriginal people were able to retain the traditional skills that were crucial to the success of the industry.[92]

The station managers carried the social overhead costs of their Aboriginal employees and dependents well into the twentieth century. Even as late as 1961, a request to automatically adjust Aboriginal wages whenever award wages were adjusted was rejected on the grounds that "the Aboriginal situation was unique as employers, rather than employees, had to bear the cost of maintaining Aboriginal workers and their dependants."[93] The provisions made for Aboriginal employees and their dependents created personal obligations between employers and employees. As in the fur trade, these personal obligations allowed for the development of rigid occupational hierarchies and paternalistic management techniques.

Occupational Hierarchies and Paternalistic Management Techniques

Many scholars who have studied Aboriginal labour in northern Australia's cattle industry have recognized that the labour relations in this industry went far beyond those generally established in industrial capitalist situations.[94] As Dawn May commented, "the social relations which developed between the boss and his Aboriginal workers were complex and clearly went beyond the parameters of the capitalist system."[95] In reality, the labour and race relations established in the cattle industry were those recognized by Pentland as personal labour relationships.

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[91] Bleakley, *The Aborigines of Australia*, 16; May, *From Bush to Station*, 60, 63; and, Stevens, *Aborigines*, 113.
[92] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 88-9.
[93] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 112.
[94] For example, see May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 100; and, Tim Rowse, "'Were You Ever Savages?' Aboriginal Insiders and Pastoralist Patronage," *Oceania* Vol. 58, No. 1 (1987), 90.
[95] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 100.

Pentland argued that personal labour organization created a system of hierarchies that was maintained and justified by paternalistic management techniques. Paternalism helped to ensure that employers could keep wages low but still receive the necessary levels of production from their employees by using non-economic rewards. Paternalistic management met the economic and social needs of the labourers but inhibited movement within the system through the rigid hierarchies it maintained. The personal relationships established in this system often meant that any new labourers who entered the industry were usually children of old labourers and understood the expectations of personal labour organization. Therefore, the new workers did little to adjust the existing system to meet their needs in new ways.[96]

Northern Australia's cattle stations all established and strictly maintained such typical hierarchical orders. Among the stock workers there was a hierarchy as well, although this one was somewhat more flexible. These hierarchies ordered and defined station relationships. As L.A. Riddett explained:

> At the station the top person was not the most able horseman, or the best brumby runner, it was the manager and in descending order came the bookkeeper, the overseer, with the mechanic, blacksmith and saddler shouldering each other at a level lower down, then the head stockman and so on to the stockmen. Aborigines did not count at all in this order, although a part-Aboriginal man ... might ascend far enough up the pecking order to reach head stockman status.[97]

These station hierarchies maintained by paternalistic management techniques, allowed the cattle industry to remain viable in an economic atmosphere that saw the failure of several other industries in the far north.[98]

Station managers often divided Aboriginal people into different categories as well. The major division was between 'insiders' and 'outsiders;' in other words, those

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[96] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 45-6; May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 83; and, Rowse, "'Were You Ever Savages'," 95-6.
[97] Riddett, *Kine, Kin and Country*, 95.
[98] Bauer, *Historical Geography*, 104; May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 1; and, O'Faircheallaigh, *Northern Territory Economy*, 1.

Aboriginal people who worked on the pastoral stations were usually given higher regards than those who continued to live in a more traditional manner. The 'outsiders' were treated with suspicion and were chased away from station property and watering holes.[99] The 'insiders' were further divided into those Aboriginal people who merely worked on a station and those who had been born and raised on a particular station. Those Aboriginal people who were born and raised on a particular station were often given the most respect and, at times, were rewarded with positions of authority over other Aboriginal employees.[100]

The occupational hierarchies on the cattle stations were emphasized by a physical and social separation of the Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian station residents. The most obvious physical separation was the layout of the station itself. As Frank Stevens explained, "Any natural advantages in the location [of homes and buildings] are dominated firstly by the homestead, secondly by the machinery sheds, thirdly by the white employees' quarters and lastly — almost as an afterthought — the Aborigines."[101] As such, the manager's home and machinery sheds were generally built on elevated ground to prevent flooding during the wet season. Often this arrangement left only low lying areas for the Aboriginal camp.[102]

Most homesteads, especially where Anglo-Australian women were living, had transplanted trees surrounding the yards to provide shade and protection from the dust of the roads and cattle paddocks. As well, the yard was generally fenced off to prevent cattle from wandering through. Neither of these features could be found in most Aboriginal camps. Some Aboriginal people did try to plant trees and gardens in their camps but with limited access to irrigation and little support from station management, their endeavours were not often successful.[103] Aboriginal employees were allowed to venture into the homestead yard only when work necessitated it, but their movement

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[99] Reynolds, *The Other Side*, 158.
[100] Rowse, "'Were You Ever Savages?'" 82.
[101] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 106.
[102] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 105-6.
[103] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 106-7.

was generally confined to the paddocks or the staff kitchen. Aboriginal employees were not allowed into the machinery sheds without supervision and Aboriginal dependents were allowed into the homestead yard only when rations were given out. Generally, the layout of the homestead served to emphasize Anglo-Australian social intercourse, comfort and convenience while segregating the Aboriginal residents to a space well beyond the limits defined by the trees and fences of the well kept yard.[104]

This physical segregation was mirrored by a strict social segregation. While managers, at times, transported Aboriginal employees to various locations, many refused to allow Aboriginal people to ride in the cabs of their trucks. Aboriginal employees always ate separately from the Anglo-Australian employees, even when working out in the bush away from the homestead. While the type of work demanded in the cattle industry — mustering, tailing and droving — required close cooperation among all workers, as soon as the work was completed, social segregation separated the Aboriginal workers from the Anglo-Australian workers.[105]

This social segregation was also maintained by the women on the station. Few records have been left expressing the relationship that existed between Anglo-Australian and Aboriginal women. However, what is known provides an excellent picture of the tenuous race relations that developed in these close contact situations. Generally, it appears that much ambivalence existed between the two groups. Anglo-Australian women, while often completely isolated from any other Anglo-Australian female friends or relatives, continued to isolate themselves from becoming friends with Aboriginal women, although a few lasting relationships did develop. On the other hand, Aboriginal women maintained their clan connections and were not as isolated as were the Anglo-Australian women. Therefore, Aboriginal women may have had an easier time adjusting to station life even though they were often treated with contempt and disgust as the Anglo-Australian women re-established the rigid social hierarchies of the more

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[104] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 131; and, May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 155-6.
[105] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 120-1.

settled areas of southern Australia.[106] In addition, these social hierarchies, maintained by paternalistic attitudes, allowed for the smooth operation and continuation of personal labour organization on the stations.

The occupational hierarchies and the physical and social segregation that were strictly maintained on the cattle stations were introduced to the Aboriginal children living on the stations early in their lives and served to socialize these children into accepting pre-defined roles in the industry. Most Aboriginal boys were introduced to the 'cattle business' when they turned nine years of age. Usually, they started out by gathering firewood or 'boiling the billy.' Older boys were sometimes allowed to ride with the stockworkers to open and close gates. By the time the boys were twelve or thirteen they were expected to be good riders and, as such, begin to undertake increasingly complex work. At first, the boys were paid very little but their pay gradually increased until they were eighteen years old and ready to accept a full workload and full Aboriginal pay.[107] While the boys steadily increased their working knowledge, their workload and their pay, they were also taught by example that they, like all of the other Aboriginal men, would never advance higher than a general stockworker. The socialization of Aboriginal peoples was most effective when the personal labour relationships had long term stability. As Dawn May explained, "the boss relationship operated most effectively when Europeans had permanent status. On properties owned and operated by several generations of one family, Aborigines transferred the 'boss' relationship from one generation to the next."[108] The occupational hierarchies created under personal labour organization and perpetuated by the socialization of Aboriginal children were maintained by paternalistic management techniques.

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[106] Riddett, *Kine, Kin and Country*, 115.
[107] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 114.
[108] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 100. Even after a series of strikes in the 1960s, the Aboriginal workers were most willing to return to work on those stations which were family-owned and run by paternalistic managers. J. K. Doolan, "Walk-off (and later return) of various Aboriginal groups from cattle stations: Victoria River District, Northern Territory," in *Aborigines and Change: Australia in the '70s*, ed. R. M. Berndt (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1977), 108-9.

Paternalism was accepted by both the employers and the employees.[109] As Ann McGrath explained, "for managers and lessees, it helped to justify the appropriation of black labour. For Aborigines, it was a promise of protection for themselves and for their community, allowing them to stay on their traditional lands."[110] Paternalism also accomplished another important task. While the Anglo-Australian managers, stock workers and wives very consciously established rigid hierarchies and social barriers to separate themselves from the Aboriginal workers, they were significantly dependent upon the Aboriginal workers who knew the country and how to live in it. Paternalism was one mechanism that helped to explain the tensions created by these wide social gaps between the master and the servant.[111] Finally, paternalism was crucial for stabilizing the personal labour organization of the cattle stations. The paternal relationships created between the station manager and his employees also extended to those Aboriginal people living in the station camps but not formally employed by the station.[112] As such, the paternal relationships established with these Aboriginal people aided in the socialization of their children, the potential future employees of the cattle station.

The paternalism that was necessary to maintain the hierarchies and explain the social gap between the Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian station residents was best achieved if the managers and head stockmen could demonstrate effective leadership. As Pentland argued, the most effective leaders were those who could establish superior — inferior contacts and show paternal interest in their employees. Additionally, effective leaders demonstrated superior energy, intelligence and fairness and supported appropriate celebrations, rewards and favours.[113] This type of leadership was clearly seen in the cattle industry.

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[109] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 99.
[110] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 99.
[111] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 155; and, McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 99.
[112] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 101.
[113] Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, 25.

Many station managers held regular picnic races for all of their employees and Aboriginal corroborees were encouraged, especially if an important Anglo-Australian visitor was expected at the station.[114] Generally, the managers and head stockmen who were able to establish the best working relationships with their Aboriginal labourers were those who were themselves skilled horsemen and could handle even the most difficult cattle. Furthermore, the most effective head stockmen allowed respected Aboriginal men to assume some of the responsibilities over various tasks. As Frank Stevens explained:

> the camp foreman approached his most respected [Aboriginal] employee, discussed the problems of the day with him and assigned him to a task, letting him pick the men he needed for the job. Most experienced cattlemen we spoke to considered this was the best way to 'work' Aborigines, as they normally picked friends or relatives over whom the leader had some influence ... Those who ignored this rule often complained about the difficulties of supervision and the inability of Aborigines to supervise each other.[115]

Those head stockmen who were unwilling, or unable, to work the cattle as well as give orders were also those men who complained the most about the poor work habits of the Aboriginal stockmen.[116] Even as late as the 1950s, Aboriginal workers were willing to accept lower wages as long as the station managers continued to meet the personal obligations created under paternalistic management techniques.[117]

While the paternalistic management techniques used in the cattle industry generally resembled those techniques used in the Rupertsland fur trade, the northern pastoralists introduced violence and physical force on the stations to a much greater degree than was experienced in the fur trade. The lengthy Aboriginal resistance made violence an accepted part of the frontier. The violence of the frontier also became a part of station life. Bill Laurie, a stockman of mixed descent, explained that "sometimes we

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[114] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 93. Corroborees are traditional Aboriginal gatherings that feature singing and dancing and are similar to powwows in Canadian Plains Aboriginal culture.
[115] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 112.
[116] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 112.
[117] Commonwealth of Australia, "Report of the Committee," 43; and, May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 151.

made a mistake and got a flogging or two. They used a stick and everything, whip, rope, hobble chain, the first thing they could pick up in their hand."[118] Aboriginal people, however, never accepted the violence passively. Bill Laurie continued to explain that too much violence was not tolerated: "See they used to belt them up too much [in Ngarinman country] you know then they'd get touchy and run away, run away to another place."[119] While it was deemed necessary for a European man to be able to "handle black fellas," it was important that he did so with at least some humanity or risk having his Aboriginal employees leave the station or retaliate with their own physical force.[120]

Some station managers, however, found that violence of any sort was not necessary if strict paternal relationships could be established between the manager and his Aboriginal labourers.[121] Constance Petrie explained that her father, Tom Petrie, a station manager in Queensland, always had good relations with his Aboriginal labourers and never feared for the safety of himself, his family or his cattle. She stated, "Father says he could always trust them; and his experience has been that if you treated them kindly they would do anything for you."[122] The superior — inferior relationships created by station hierarchies was enough incentive for good work if the manager was willing to accept all of the responsibilities associated with assuming a superior, or fatherly, role on the station. Those Aboriginal employees who worked on stations that used paternalistic management techniques effectively often expressed the belief that they were better off on the cattle stations than on government-run settlements.[123]

Violence, however, did serve another important role for the northern pastoralists. Unlike the fur traders in Rupertsland who were engaged predominantly in a system of commodity exchange, the station managers in northern Australia were engaged in a

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[118] In Shaw, *When the Dust Come*, 109.
[119] Shaw, *When the Dust Come*, 109.
[120] May, *From Bush to Station*, 71; and, Riddett, *Kine, Kin and Country*, 90.
[121] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 99.
[122] In Rosser, *Up Rode the Troopers*, 118.
[123] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 116.

system of commodity production. As such, the pastoralists needed to colonize the northern territories and gain unequivocal control of the land. As Ann McGrath commented, "Violence was one of the most intentional, direct and effective means of achieving colonisation. Violence shocks, embarrasses, is dramatic. Its presence needs to be emphasised, but we must also look beyond to its effects, to the dynamics of subsequent power relationships."[124] Violence was not only effective in allowing the pastoralists to gain control of the land in northern Australia, it was also effective in allowing the pastoralists to continue to physically demonstrate Anglo-Australian supremacy on land understood best by the Aboriginal people from whom it was appropriated.

Over time, the paternalistic management techniques used in the cattle industry began to be defined racially. Gradually, racist attitudes began to justify the inequalities inherent to the capitalist system on the cattle stations and began to socialize the Aboriginal communities into accepting their inferior position as defined by the Anglo-Australian society. As the paternalistic management techniques were increasingly expressed along racial terms, basic racist assumptions began to develop among the general Anglo-Australian public, even among those not directly involved in the cattle industry. For example, when discussing the issue of Aboriginal employment in the cattle industry, Archdale Parkhill, Minister for the Interior, expressed the views of many pastoralists by arguing that even though "the cry is sometimes raised that the coloured race is being utilized for cheapness and to the exclusion of the white race. Such a contention is untenable because, except in some instances, the black is inferior to the white, and is consequently no cheaper in the long run."[125] Eventually, these racist assumptions began to influence the policies and legislation created to regulate Aboriginal labour.[126]

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[124] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 7.
[125] Australian Archives, CRS A1 34/3449, "The Northern Territory. Report of a Tour by the Honourable Archdale Parkhill, M.P., Minister for the Interior," 31 August, 1932, 20.
[126] C.D. Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia: Aboriginal Policy and Practice -- Volume II* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971), 28.

Some of the most influential policy-makers firmly upheld the ideals expressed in these attitudes and assumptions. J.W. Bleakley, Chief Protector of Aborigines in Queensland from 1914 to 1942, argued that the Aboriginal people's "ignorance in business dealings and improvidence in use of their earnings made them easy prey of the unscrupulous."[127] He suggested that the best method to prevent any unscrupulous dealings was to ensure that the Aboriginal workers' wages were paid not to the worker directly, but instead to the Protector who could then insure that the money was spent wisely. He further argued that women and children needed to be 'rescued' from improper influence and provided with "suitable education and training."[128] Archibald Meston, an influential politician largely responsible for the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897* in Queensland, was a member of the Brisbane Aborigines Protection Society for several years prior to the creation of this legislation and displayed open contempt for mixed descent people, calling for the strict segregation of the Aboriginal population.[129] Eventually, the government, judicial bodies and missionary organizations began to accept and act upon the imagined need to solve the various Aboriginal 'problems' in the tradition of paternalistic management. These external influences had a profound impact on the Aboriginal people as a whole, and in particular, those of mixed descent.

The Decline of Personal Labour Organization in Northern Australia

In Rupertsland, the Hudson's Bay Company Charter of 1670 extended a legal proprietorship and the right to administer the territory to the Company. However, the HBC was not initially concerned with colonization and, therefore, exercised their administrative powers only to the extent needed to conduct a profitable trade. In

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[127] Bleakley, *Aborigines of Australia*, 138.
[128] Bleakley, *Aborigines of Australia*, 138.
[129] William Thorpe, "Archibald Meston and Aboriginal Legislation in Colonial Queensland," *Historical Studies* Vol. 21, No. 82 (1984), 54, 62-3.

Australia, the establishment of exclusive land tenure was an important aspect of the cattle industry; therefore, formal government regulations were introduced to the industry shortly after its establishment in the north. As such, it is important to examine the legislation introduced in northern Australia and its effect on the industry.

Queensland was the first state to directly intervene in the lives of the Aboriginal people. In 1897, the State enacted the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act*. As its name implied, the Act was meant to 'protect' the Aboriginal people, mainly by restricting their movement on the land and requiring that formal contracts be signed between station managers and Aboriginal labourers.[130] Aboriginal Protectors were appointed to enforce the regulations of the Act and were given powers similar to magistrates in order to personally and legally handle any injustices committed against the Aboriginal people under their care. As a result, many of the first Protectors were also police officers.[131] However, the Act was largely ineffectual as it proved too difficult to patrol and enforce the regulations, especially in the more remote regions of the state.[132] While this legislation was specific to Queensland, similar legislation was enacted at different times in almost all of the States.

The 1897 Act was not well received amongst the pastoralists.[133] Most station managers did not want to bother with formal employment contracts and, as such, would often only sign contracts with a few Aboriginal workers and instruct the others to 'go bush' if any policemen came onto the station. Other managers signed contracts only with those Aboriginal workers who were employed at the head station and did not bother with contracts for those Aboriginal workers employed on out stations (where most of the Aboriginal stockmen worked anyway).[134] Often, the Protectors chose to

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[130] Bleakley, *Aborigines in Australia*, 127; May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 65; Rowley, *Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, 183-4; and, Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia*, 109-12.
[131] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 62; Rowley, *Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, 184; and, Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia*, 109.
[132] Bleakley, *Aborigines in Australia*, 127; May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 60-7; and, C.D. Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines: Aboriginal Policy and Practice — Volume III* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971), 304.
[133] Bleakley, *Aborigines in Australia*, 128.
[134] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 66.

ignore these actions by the managers. The more Aboriginal people who were employed, whether under formal contract or not, meant there were less who needed welfare from the government.[135]

The station managers also resented the enforcement of a minimum wage for Aboriginal workers.[136] Again, many managers worked around this regulation by ensuring that the wages were spent at the station store, often before the Aboriginal worker was even given the money. In 1904 and 1909, amendments were made to the Act instructing wages for Aboriginal workers be paid directly to an account controlled by the local Protector. However, this regulation proved difficult to enforce and the wages that were deposited were sometimes deposited in the wrong account. Additionally, many Aboriginal workers only traveled into town once a year and, therefore, found it difficult to access their money when they needed it.[137] Even though the Act was intended to benefit the Aboriginal people, it benefited the station managers more. Still, the managers resented any government interference in the employer — employee relationships that were developing on the stations under personal labour organization.[138]

While the cattle industry continued to benefit from inexpensive Aboriginal labour in the early twentieth century, increasing job competition in other industries began to change the attitude of many Anglo-Australian workers towards Aboriginal people. There was a growing resentment towards Aboriginal labourers which began to be expressed through racial prejudice. By 1915, the Australian Workers Union (AWU) made a formal complaint to the government, arguing that lower Aboriginal wages meant that fewer white Australians were finding employment in the north. The AWU's opposition was successful in most industries. Legislation was passed in 1919 raising the minimum wage of Aboriginal workers to equal that of Anglo-Australian workers in

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[135] Bleakley, *Aborigines in Australia*, 128.
[136] In 1901, the minimum wage on cattle stations was set at five shillings a month plus food and clothing. May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 65.
[137] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 65-73.
[138] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 74.

every industry except the cattle industry where Aboriginal wages were raised to only two thirds of that for Anglo-Australian station workers.[139] Some government officials argued that equal wages in the cattle industry would result in a significant decrease in Aboriginal employment. Perhaps even more importantly, however, many government officials recognized that no matter what the AWU said, there were simply not enough Anglo-Australians willing to work on the cattle stations. Aboriginal labour was still crucial to the success of the cattle industry and the economic conditions faced by the pastoralists continued to encourage the maintenance of personal labour organization.[140]

Shortly after the 1919 Employment Regulations, however, the cattle industry suffered from a deep recession. As a result, most Anglo-Australian station workers saw a decrease in their wages, although Aboriginal wages remained constant until 1930 when both the Aboriginal Employment Regulation and the Station Hand Award were suspended.[141] As a result of the recession, many station managers no longer felt that they could continue to support unemployed dependents on their stations. For the first time, some station managers began to remove the unemployed residents to government settlements or missions.[142] Chief Protector Bleakley argued in 1928 that removing the Aboriginal employees' relatives would destabilize the workforce and recommended instead that station rents be decreased.[143] However, not all of the government officials agreed with Bleakley's opinion and his recommendation was ignored.

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[139] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 104, 107; and, Bleakley, *Aborigines in Australia*, 172.
[140] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 75-84.
[141] The Station Hand Award was the legislation that set the minimum wage for Anglo-Australian station workers. Although the Station Hand Award was suspended for only twelve months, the Aboriginal Employment Regulation was suspended for fifteen years until a slight increase was introduced in 1945. However, it was not until 1960 in the Northern Territory and 1967 in Queensland that legislation finally required Aboriginal workers be paid equal wages as those awarded to Anglo-Australians. Unfortunately, the 1960 Northern Territory legislation was not enforced and both this legislation and the 1967 Queensland legislation contained a 'slow workers' clause under which most Aboriginal workers could be classified and continue to be paid less than other workers. Equal pay was not truly achieved until 1971 when the 'Assisted Aborigines' category was finally expunged in new legislation. May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 110-2, 164-8.
[142] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 114.
[143] Bleakley, "Report on the Aboriginals," 9-10.

In another effort to combat the recession, some station managers began to dismiss their Aboriginal employees when the mustering season was over. As a result, many Aboriginal people began to move into the urban centres as they were steadily pushed into the casual labour market.[144] Those few Aboriginal employees who remained employed year-round on the stations became responsible for their own room and board during the recession.[145] The station managers could no longer afford to cover the social overhead costs of their employees and, as such, personal labour organization began to decline.

The recession had a disastrous impact on the cattle industry; however, it remained one of the most important industries in northern Australia. Therefore, the Queensland State and Australian Commonwealth governments intervened in an effort to keep the industry viable while minimizing government expenditure on Aboriginal welfare. Chief Protector Bleakley was extremely influential in developing Aboriginal policies in northern Australia after World War I. The paternalistic attitudes that initially developed on the cattle stations were voiced in the Australian government by Bleakley, as well as other influential men.[146]

The policy that had, perhaps, the most profound influence on the cattle industry was the removal policy introduced by Bleakley. The Chief Protector was given the authority to remove any Aboriginal person from a cattle station to a government settlement or mission.[147] In essence, the government settlements and missions became a reserve pool of labour for the pastoralists.[148] As C.D. Rowley explained, the settlements served "as a place from which labour could be obtained as required, to which it could be returned when not, and payment for which might make no provision for maintenance of dependants."[149] Station managers no longer had the responsibility of providing for the

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[144] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 114-5.
[145] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 119.
[146] For an example of these attitudes, see Bleakley, *Aborigines in Australia*, 35, 49, 99-100, 124, 137-8, 140-1.
[147] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 122.
[148] McGrath, "'Spinifex Fairies,'" 245.
[149] Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia*, 66.

dependents of employees and yet they had a reliable source of labour whenever work was needed to be done. In other words, the responsibility of carrying the social overhead costs of the Aboriginal employees had shifted from the station managers to the government.

At the same time as the social overhead costs were transferred, new technology was introduced to the industry that resulted in a decline in the amount of necessary labour on the cattle stations. The open range system, which required Aboriginal knowledge and labour, was slowly but steadily replaced by more modern ranching techniques, including the use of helicopters instead of horses for mustering. As well, transportation routes were improved, allowing cattle to be shipped by truck instead of being driven overland. In addition to the new technology, a fifteen year agreement was negotiated guaranteeing markets in the United Kingdom for Australian beef. A further boost came when the Australian industry secured a position in the American market. All of these changes worked together to decrease the number of necessary Aboriginal labourers on the northern stations.[150] As a result, personal labour organization declined in the northern Australian cattle industry.

Conclusion

The cattle industry was one of the most important industries in northern Australia and, as such, it had considerable impact on the economic, political and social development of this region. The industry developed in an atmosphere of labour shortages for the station managers and limited choice of potential employers for the Aboriginal people. Faced with these economic conditions, the station managers assumed the social overhead costs of their Aboriginal workers and, as a result, developed personal labour organization. While it would be easy to focus solely on the

[150] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 168.

social relationships that developed between the Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian people in the cattle industry, such an approach would exclude the important economic relationships that developed and their impact on the experiences of Aboriginal people in northern Australia.

The employment conditions on the cattle stations in northern Australia lend themselves to comparison with the plantations common to the southern United States during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, it would be too simplistic to assume that a similar system of slavery existed on both the American plantations and the northern Australian cattle stations. The Aboriginal labourers in Australia were never sold to the cattle station managers in the same manner in which the African slaves were sold to the plantation owners. Even more importantly, the unique skills and knowledge of the Aboriginal people, as well as the severe labour shortage faced by the pastoralists, made the station managers dependent upon the Aboriginal people.[151] At the same time, the Aboriginal people were dependent upon the station managers for continued access to their traditional lands and for access to European technology. As such, the personal obligations that developed between the station managers and their Aboriginal employees far exceeded the relationships developed on the American plantations between the owners and the slaves.

Similarly, it is misleading to approach the economic system of the northern Australian cattle industry as an articulation of two separate modes of production as some Australian scholars suggest.[152] As with the Rupertsland fur trade, the Aboriginal people involved in the cattle industry did not maintain a strict separation between traditional and capitalist endeavours. Instead, they developed a modified mode of production that incorporated both traditional, subsistence activities and commercial interaction into one mode during the late nineteenth century.

Therefore, much like the Rupertsland fur trade, the cattle industry in northern Australia was a capitalist system described by H. Clare Pentland as personal labour

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[151] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 99.
[152] See for example, Riddett, *Kine, Kin and Country*, 47-61.

organization. Even though both the fur trade and the cattle industry utilized personal labour organization, the external influences that impacted on the two industries were significantly different, especially concerning the experiences of the mixed descent populations created by the interaction of Aboriginal and European peoples. As a result, it was only in Rupertsland that the mixed descent population was able to express a unique identity that continues to be recognized to this day. The experiences of the mixed descent people in Rupertsland are examined in the following chapter.

Chapter Five: The Development and Expression of a Métis Identity in Canada

The appearance and growth of a mixed descent population has been a significant aspect of Canadian historical development since the beginning of French and British colonization efforts and has occurred to some degree in every region in Canada. However, these mixed descent populations did not experience the same system of economic development in every region and, therefore, the history of these various groups differs extensively. As such, while many mixed descent peoples across Canada today claim an attachment to what has been labeled a distinct Métis identity, this identity was first expressed in an organized and concerted effort in only one region in Canada: Rupertsland.

The beginnings of a distinct and separate identity was established when the mixed descent population in Canada was given a unique economic role to perform in the fur trade. However, while the fur trade was certainly an important catalyst in the development and expression of the Métis identity, it is too simplistic to assert that it was the only catalyst. The fur trade was conducted in several regions of Canada and yet it was only in Rupertsland where the Métis first asserted themselves as a distinct people. The unique economic system that developed in the Rupertsland fur trade and the important role that the mixed descent population fulfilled in this region only partially explains the reason for this phenomenon.

As was discussed in a previous chapter, the fur trade that was conducted in the Atlantic provinces and central Canada was, at least initially, a subsidiary of the cod fisheries and, therefore, the mixed descent population were not provided with an opportunity to fill an important economic niche.[1] On Canada's west coast, the situation

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[1] Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), 9.

was similar. The racial animosities between the Aboriginal inhabitants and the European colonizers were intense and served to polarize the population. Additionally, the fur trade was only important in this region for less than a century and the participants did not develop the kind of interdependency that was an important characteristic of the Rupertsland fur trade.[2] As such, the inter-racial relationships that did develop in the west coast region were not highly valued and the mixed descent population here was unable to fill any important economic niche as did its counterpart in Rupertsland.[3]

In the Great Lakes region, the fur trade was independent of any other economic industry and the racial animosities between the Aboriginal and European peoples were not as severe as on the west coast. At the same time, however, warfare between the British and French colonizers allowed the fur trade to take on important political and military overtones.[4] Even so, the economics of the fur trade in this region did allow for the growing mixed descent population to fill an important economic niche. Additionally, the mixed descent population was able to cement important military alliances between the various Aboriginal groups and European powers which provided them with unique status and prestige.[5] During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the fur trade continued to grow in importance as the dominant economic activity. In addition, the mixed descent population continued to grow and capitalize upon their unique role in the fur trade industry.[6] However, these mixed descent communities never expressed their developing identity as did the Métis in Rupertsland. At the peak of the development of the unique identity of the Great Lakes communities, the agricultural industry that the fur trade had previously supported began to dominate

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[2] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 206.
[3] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 206.
[4] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 9.
[5] Marcel Giraud, *The Métis of the Canadian West*, Vol. I, trans. George Woodcock (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986), 227.
[6] Jacqueline Peterson, "Ethnogenesis: Settlement and Growth of a 'New People,'" *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1982), 28-9.

the economy of the region and the mixed descent population quickly lost the status and prestige it previously gained in the fur trade.[7]

It was only in Rupertsland that the unique economic system of the fur trade allowed the mixed descent population to develop a specialized role through which they could develop a unique identity as a distinct people and be recognized as such by those outside the group. Furthermore, it was only in Rupertsland where the British elite made a concerted effort to hinder large scale European agricultural settlement for almost two centuries. The combination of the development of a specialized economic role plus the significant length of time in which agricultural settlement was blocked, allowed the mixed descent population of Rupertsland the opportunity and the means to develop a strong and cohesive identity. As such, when this economic role, and the identity that developed with it, was threatened by external forces, the Métis and country-born elite were able to unite the mixed descent population as a people in order to exert their own economic and political pressures.

Families and Inter-Racial Relationships in the Rupertsland Fur Trade

Even though the French traders, the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company all used personal labour organization as the most viable method for establishing and maintaining the fur trade in Rupertsland, two unique styles of trade developed. The French traders, and later the NWC, developed a style of trade that created a necessity for closer personal relationships to be established between the European traders and the Aboriginal trappers than was required by the HBC's style of trade. The French traders and the NWC traveled directly to the Aboriginal communities

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[7] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 236; Innis, *Fur Trade*, 225; and Jacqueline Peterson, "Many roads to Red River: Métis genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1815," in *The New Peoples: being and becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 64.

to initiate and conduct trade for extended periods of time.[8] The HBC, on the other hand, established permanent posts where the formal trade was carried out, at least before intense competition forced the Company to expand inland and take cues from the NWC style of trade. The HBC did, of course, send men out to initiate contact with the Aboriginal trappers from the very beginning; however, the Company only sent a few men for a minimal amount of time. These different styles of trade affected the relationships that developed between the European and Aboriginal peoples and had an important influence on the development of the mixed descent populations around the HBC and NWC posts.[9]

The French traders were the first to understand the important and unique role that the Aboriginal women could perform in the fur trade. The role of Aboriginal women became even more important as the trade expanded west. As such, many traders saw a distinct advantage in establishing a personal relationship with an influential woman. As Marcel Giraud explained:

> The trader willingly adopted the custom of cohabitation with Indian women, whose presence now seemed necessary for the process of trafficking and to meet the very necessities of his material existence. For him the Indian woman pounded Indian corn, prepared segamite, dressed the furs he collected, cut out from mooseskin the moccasins he used in travelling over the frozen soil, and repaired his canoes. She intervened personally in his transactions with the Indians, and, if the need arose, she warded off the plots that threatened the trader. And this diversity of roles the Indian women would assume on an even broader scale beyond Lake Superior.[10]

In addition to the practical, economic roles that Aboriginal women performed, they also became close companions to the men in an area were no European women resided.[11]

After the French were defeated in North America in 1763, the fur trade based in Montreal continued with little interruption or change. The French merchants in

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[8] Peterson, "Ethnogenesis," 26.
[9] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 215.
[10] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 237-8.
[11] Dickason, "From 'One Nation,'" 22, 24.

Montreal were replaced by predominantly Scottish merchants, however, the *voyageurs* who were hired to make the long trek to the interior were recruited from the same French Canadian and Iroquois men. As such, when the new Montreal merchants eventually banded together to form the North West Company, the style of trade that was adopted remained relatively unchanged from that established by the early French traders.[12] Over time, many of the personal contacts established between the Aboriginal women and the *voyageurs* developed into long lasting and devoted relationships.[13]

By the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, a significant mixed descent population had been created which served to further strengthen the ties between the *voyageurs* and their Aboriginal wives. These men, who began to live permanently in Rupertsland after their contracts with the NWC had expired, eventually formed a new class in the Montreal fur trade and were referred to as *gens libre* or freemen. While some of these men were deserters and others were simply fearful of returning to eastern Canada after having spent several years in an intimate relationship with an Aboriginal woman, most simply refused to leave their wives and children out of loyalty and devotion, and, therefore, remained in the west after their contracts had ended.[14]

The freemen, who were no longer officially employed with the fur trading company, began to develop their own unique place in the fur trade society of Rupertsland. Most often the freemen would hunt, fish and trap in order to trade with the fur companies. These men would position themselves strategically on the long supply routes from Montreal in order to offer baked bread, various kinds of food, salt and sugar, as well as to have bark and resin on hand in order to aid the *voyageurs* in repairing their canoes. In exchange for these services, the freemen accepted buffalo robes and leather garments which they often later traded to the nearest post for a profit.

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[12] John Foster, "The Plains Métis," in *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience*, ed. R. Bruce Morrison and C. Roderick Wilson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1986), 381; and Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 239.

[13] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 239.

[14] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 264-6.

At times, the freemen would also temporarily offer their services as labourers for the NWC. Eventually, even the rival HBC began to value the services provided by the freemen.[15]

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, some of the freemen and their families began settling in areas suitable for cultivation, particularly in the Red River and Pembina regions, where they grew small gardens to supplement their hunting. Eventually, these small agricultural communities grew into the first freemen settlements. From these settlements, the freemen often actively participated in the fur trade by acting as trappers, provisioners, temporary servants and engaging in transport services between the posts.[16] The close, personal relationships established by the Montreal style of trade aided in the development of the class of freemen around the North West Company posts. However, the style of trade developed by the Hudson's Bay Company more closely regulated the contacts made between the Aboriginal and European peoples and, as such, a similar class did not develop around the HBC posts.

The HBC Board of Directors in London initially maintained a policy that prohibited personal relationships between Company men and Aboriginal women.[17] This policy was intended to restrict the Aboriginal and European contacts to strictly commercial relationships. It applied not only to the men engaged directly within the forts, but also to the explorers who ventured into the interior. The ideals of this policy, while often worded in terms of upholding the values of the Church of England, had economic motivations. Many of the the Directors' attitudes were based on a suspicion that too much personal contact between post employees and Aboriginal peoples would lead to a private trade in furs that would seriously infringe on company profits. Additionally, the Directors feared that if the post employees demonstrated too much

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[15] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 267-8.
[16] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 270-5.
[17] Jennifer Brown, "Children of the Early Fur Trades," in *Childhood and Family in Canadian History*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1982), 58; and, Innis, *Fur Trade*, 135.

confidence in friendly relations between themselves and the Aboriginal peoples, the Aboriginal men would be encouraged to act aggressively and raid the posts.[18]

Even though severe penalties, including imprisonment and the withholding of wages, were threatened for anyone who broke this policy, most chief factors were lenient in their interpretation of the Directors' policy. Often the officers would punish and condemn the most 'grave misdemeanors' and ignore the stable relationships that developed because they quickly realized, as did the French traders before them, that the Aboriginal women performed important roles in establishing trading alliances and in providing food, clothing and comfort for the men in the post that could not be gained elsewhere. Stated simply, the HBC men were too dependent on the unique skills of the Aboriginal men and women to apply the Board of Directors' policy in the strictest sense.[19] The Company's dependence on Aboriginal skills continued to increase as competition forced the HBC to expand its operations further west.

Clearly, the different trading styles of the companies created unique situations for the mixed descent populations that developed around both companies. Many of the mixed descent employees of the HBC were the sons of officers or highly respected labourers of the company. On the other hand, many of the mixed descent employees of the NWC were the sons of the freemen and were engaged in more menial and less prestigious tasks. While initially these differences did not interfere with friendly relations among the two groups, over time, especially after the 1821 merger of the HBC and the NWC, the Anglophone sons of HBC officers developed a feeling of superiority over their Francophone counterparts.[20]

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[18] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol 1, 285-7.
[19] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 299-305; and, Brown, "Children of the Early Fur Trades," 58.
[20] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 355.

Economic Opportunities for Mixed Descent Children in Rupertsland Prior to 1821

It is not absolutely clear when the mixed descent population in Rupertsland began to reach significant numbers. On the coast of the Hudson Bay, the first mixed descent people were probably not mentioned in journals because of the disapproval and the reprimands such actions would bring from the Board of Directors in London. Additionally, little mention is made of the first mixed descent children by the early French traders as initially many of these children would have simply been absorbed into their mothers' society. The first mention of the mixed descent people in the Hudson's Bay Company journals, found at the beginning of the eighteenth century, are vague and are often in reference to the activities of the French traders. Marcel Giraud assumed that references to 'French Indians' or 'half-French *coureurs de bois*' were in actuality references to men of mixed descent.[21] The 'French Indians' might have been Aboriginal trappers who were firmly allied with the French traders; however, it is possible that the 'half-French *coureurs de bois*' were, indeed, men of mixed descent. At any rate, the French traders had at this point been active in the Great Lakes and James Bay regions for several decades and, therefore, it is not unlikely that the mixed descent population was already of significant size.[22]

By the end of the eighteenth century, the HBC journals are not only making clear references to people of mixed descent associated with the French traders, but also to those around their own posts. Additionally, the officers are referring to the mixed descent people as a distinct group, separate from both the European and the Aboriginal peoples.[23] From the beginning, the mixed descent children were given a higher status than their Aboriginal ancestors by the employees of the HBC. These children were considered to be better hunters, better marksmen, more active and more attractive than the full-blood Aboriginal children.[24] In other words, even by the end of the eighteenth

[21] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 320.
[22] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 320.
[23] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 319-21.
[24] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 322.

century the mixed descent children were being socialized into accepting a separate status and role as defined by the HBC.

Even though all of the children of mixed descent were assigned a higher status than the other Aboriginal children, the HBC's employment hierarchy was also imposed upon the mixed descent population. As such, it was not simply that a child's father was European, but instead what position the father held in the company that ultimately determined his or her status.[25] As Giraud explained:

> especially the children of employees of lower rank — and even more those who owed their birth to transitory unions and whose fathers were actually unknown — grew up among the Indians, mingled with their families, and quickly lost the memory of their origins ...
>
> But as well as this category ... another group emerged that remained more directly associated with the life of the forts, and whose closer relations with the whites seemed destined to offer them a higher status. These included the offspring of officers of higher rank, the sons of the heads of posts, or those children of more modest employees who had passed their early years in the immediate neighborhood of the forts and in the company of fathers who became separated from them only on the day of their departure.[26]

This imposition of the fur trade employment hierarchy on the mixed descent population played an important role in their historical development as a people and the eventual expression of their own unique identity.

By the late eighteenth century, and prior to 1821, it was common for the mixed descent sons of officers and highly regarded employees to find positions in the lower ranks of the Hudson's Bay Company. Initially, the sons of officers were able to advance relatively high in the employment hierarchy. Some were even promoted to positions of trader at secondary posts. Those men of mixed descent who were promoted were all sons of highly respected and active officers who had been well educated by their fathers.[27] However, these mixed descent men were the exception as most found

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[25] Carol M. Judd, "Native labour and social stratification in the Hudson's Bay Company's Northern Department, 1770-1870," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* Vol. I4, No. 4 (1980), 308.
[26] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 323-4.
[27] Judd, "Native labour," 310.

positions as general labourers. Often, their employment involved the construction and navigation of canoes, the direct initiation of trade with the Aboriginal trappers in the interior, acting as interpreters or provisioning the posts. Eventually, the mixed descent men around the HBC posts fulfilled the same role as the freemen around the NWC posts. [28]

Those mixed descent men who achieved the highest ranks within the Hudson's Bay Company were those whose fathers were influential and wealthy enough to ensure that their sons received a proper education.[29] Initially, the officers had to secure passage for their sons to Europe in order for them to receive a formal education. Some officers were successful in appealing to the Board of Directors and received permission to send their sons to Europe. In fact, the South Ronaldshay School in the Orkney Islands was established to educate these boys of mixed descent. However, many of the sons who were educated overseas never returned to Rupertsland and, as a result, the HBC Directors became very strict on granting permission to send mixed descent children to Europe after 1791.[30] But the pressures to provide an education for the officers' country-born sons continued and the Board of Directors were forced to respond.[31]

In 1794, the first attempts at educating the children in Rupertsland were made at Moose Factory, York Factory, Eastmain and Fort Churchill. Initially, this education was denied to Aboriginal children of full descent, but by 1808 a more concerted effort at hiring proper teachers from the Orkney Islands was attempted and education was offered to Aboriginal children as well as the sons of HBC employees. While some employees wished to provide their daughters with a basic education as well, this practice was never truly attempted. The education was only provided at the coastal posts, attendance was not mandatory and post operations always took precedence over the education process. As a result, it was really only the sons of officers who received any education at all and

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[28] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 334-5.
[29] Judd, "Native labour," 310.
[30] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 339-40.
[31] Brown, "Children of the Early Fur Trades," 59.

served to further separate the children of mixed descent through an imposed class system of prestige and privilege.[32]

Fewer French or North West Company officers made the effort to educate and support their Métis sons, although some did send their sons to eastern Canada or the American territories to receive an education. Jennifer Brown suggests that the NWC officers had closer attachments to 'civilized' society in Lower Canada and, therefore, did not form strong alliances with their mixed descent families in Rupertsland.[33] More importantly, many of the mixed descent children around the NWC posts were sons and daughters of the freemen. These men most likely could not have afforded, nor necessarily seen the need, to formally educate their sons. Instead, these men would have educated their sons in the manner of hunting, trapping and trafficking in furs. Most of these children, then, succeeded their fathers in the more subordinate roles of the fur trade, for example *voyageur*, guide, interpreter or provisioner.[34]

The economic conditions that the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company faced in Rupertsland influenced the labour system and labour relations that the officers of the companies imposed on the servants. The rigid employment hierarchies that allowed only limited upward mobility ensured that the companies would continue to have a sufficient general labour force in an environment of labour scarcity.[35] British employers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries believed that their predominantly uneducated employees lacked drive and ability and, therefore, were not given a voice in policy-making or government.[36] This attitude was applied by the fur trade officers in Rupertsland and reinforced the paternalistic labour relations characteristic of personal labour organization. These labour relations, that emphasized the superior-inferior connection between the officers and servants, were not challenged

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[32] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 341-3.
[33] Brown, "Children of the Early Fur Trades," 55-6.
[34] Giraud, *The Métis*, Vol. I, 345-7.
[35] H. C. Pentland, "The Canadian Industrial Relations System: Some Formative Factors," *Labour/Le Travailleur* (1979), 11.
[36] Pentland, "Canadian Industrial," 12.

as long as mercantilist ideals and personal labour relations influenced the organization of the industry. However, when Governor George Simpson introduced industrial capitalist ideals in 1821, the personal labour organization of the fur trade faltered and many of the Company servants began questioning the labour relations that characterized the fur trade.

The 1821 Merger and the Decline of Personal Labour Organization in Rupertsland

In 1821, as a result of intense competition and soaring operating costs, the North West Company merged with the Hudson's Bay Company. As was discussed in a previous chapter, Governor George Simpson quickly introduced several important changes and restructured the fur trade company to reflect his new ideals. Shortly after the merger, many of the labourers were laid off as all the redundant posts were closed. Improvements in the transportation system also resulted in numerous lay offs, as less men were required on the routes. Conservation measures in trapped out areas were introduced and attitudes of temperance were stressed. Most importantly, Simpson introduced new attitudes concerning the usefulness of employees of mixed descent and initiated ethnic hiring practices.[37] As the economic conditions in Rupertsland began to change, Simpson was gradually able to phase out personal labour organization. As he did so, he created numerous stresses on the mixed descent population of Rupertsland and as a response, some of the Métis and country-born began to call for action.

At the same time that the HBC was restructuring its trade, a growth in the American fur trade market supported a concept of free trade and interfered with the Company's monopoly in the Red River region. Traders from the American Fur Company established contacts in Red River and growing communities in Pembina and

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[37] Carol M. Judd, "'Mixt Bands:' 1821-70," in *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference*, ed. C. M. Judd and A. J. Ray (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 130-1.

St. Paul encouraged some of the fur traffic to move through these American markets and not the HBC posts. In response to this new competition, the HBC tightened their trading restrictions, arguing that under the authority of their 1670 Charter any traders operating outside the Company were in fact violating the law. To illustrate their point, the HBC arrested four Métis men in the spring of 1849 and charged them with illicitly trafficking in furs.

Guillaume Sayer was tried on May 17, 1849. Although Sayer admitted his guilt, the Hudson's Bay Company and the Council of Assiniboia did not have any means in which to enforce the court's decision and as such, he was released without punishment and the cases of the other three men charged with Sayer were never brought to trial.[38] Shortly after this decision was handed down, a French Canadian juror from the trial sent up a cry among the crowd — "*Le commerce est libre! Vive la liberte!*" This created a general confusion among those men who were awaiting the decision of the court and as a result, the Métis and the French Canadians interpreted the court's decision as an acceptance of free trade in Rupertsland.[39]

The Sayer trial was an important event in the expression of the Métis people's economic rights. On the surface, it seemed straightforward. The HBC and the courts were trying to prohibit free trade in Rupertsland. However, their inaction and limited authority confused the situation and, as such, allowed the Métis traders to succeed in establishing a free trade movement. However, the economic and political motivations behind the case were more complex. The HBC was motivated by a desire to protect its failing fur trade monopoly in Rupertsland while continuing to restructure the trade in order to become more competitive and profitable in a changing European market. The HBC wanted a public display of its authority and, therefore, proceeded with the trial even though Sayer admitted his guilt and the Company could not enforce any decision against Sayer. On the other hand, the Métis and French Canadians of Red River,

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[38] J. M. Bumsted, *The Red River Rebellion* (Toronto: Watson and Dwyer Publishing, 1996), 32.
[39] Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress, and Present State with some account of the native races and its general history to the present day* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1972), 373-6.

particularly those involved in the commercial aspect of the fur trade, were interested in the outcome of the trial as it could potentially improve their declining economic position in the trade by formally ending the HBC monopoly in the Red River region. As such, when the HBC could not enforce the court's decision, these men were able to establish a *de facto* free trade in the southern parts of Rupertsland and effect a small shift in the balance of power such that they were then in a better position to profit individually from the trade.

In the two decades that followed the Sayer trial, increasing competition and changing economic conditions in Rupertsland continually forced the Hudson's Bay Company to restructure its trading methods. Finally, by 1863, industrial capitalist interests had gained control of the London Board of Directors.[40] At this point, the ideals of the Company began to drastically change. Personal labour organization was steadily phased out and replaced by more impersonal employer-employee relations, particularly in the southern regions. The Company was no longer in a position where it needed to cover the social overhead costs of its employees and new economic goals changed the approach of the Directors who wished to establish a basic retail business. However, in order to maintain a viable retail business, the people of Rupertsland still needed assistance in providing the social overhead costs for their families. Therefore, at the end of the 1860s, the HBC negotiated a transfer of its civil and legal authority over Rupertsland to the Canadian government and, in so doing, transferred the responsibility of carrying the social overhead costs of the people of Rupertsland from the Company to the government.[41]

This dramatic switch in the goals, orientation and structure of the Rupertsland fur trade suddenly threatened the already declining economic position established and maintained by the people of mixed descent, in particular the Métis traders and provisioners, over the past century. At the same time, the dramatic restructuring of the

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[40] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 355.

[41] Frank Tough, "Aboriginal Rights Versus the Deed of Surrender: The Legal Rights of Native Peoples and Canada's Acquisition of the Hudson's Bay Company Territory," *Prairie Forum* Vol. 17, No. 2 (1992), 241-3.

Hudson's Bay Company threatened the position and status of the country-born who still maintained a position of status and prestige in the Company. With little left to lose and a chance to re-establish their economic power and position in Rupertsland, the elite of the mixed descent population resisted the unilateral decision of the Board of Directors to transfer the control of Rupertsland to the Dominion of Canada.

The Rupertsland Transfer and the Provisional Government of 1869-70

After the 1821 merger, and increasingly until the 1860s, Governor Simpson initiated a system of centralized control. This had negative effects on the morale of the HBC officers who were asked to relinquish much of their power and to abandon their personal interests and shares in the company. As Innis explained:

> The chief problem which followed from competition and the increasing centralization of control was a continued decline in initiative among the traders in the interior ... Complaints were numerous that young men no longer found any inducement to enter the service because of the low returns. Finally more direct control which followed improved transportation tended to disregard the interests of the individual trader. The net result was the abandonment of the old partnership arrangements and the appointment of the personnel on a contract basis. The arrangements which had characterized the fur trade from its beginning in New France, by which inland traders were stimulated to greater activities through a share of the profits, disappeared with the development of transportation facilities and the new discipline held sway.[42]

This restructuring eventually tore apart the closely linked economy that had previously existed in Rupertsland.[43] In essence, Simpson tried too quickly to impose industrial capitalist organization on the Company. He hoped to establish the Red River Settlement as a free labour market and end the need for the HBC to carry the social overhead costs

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[42] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 354-5.

[43] Frank Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail': Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996), 58.

of its employees. However, Red River never became the free labour market that Simpson had hoped for as other growing industries attracted many of the potential labourers away from the fur trade. Simpson's reorganization attempts seriously demoralized the Company's workforce and by 1850 the Company had lost much of its superiority in the Canadian economy.[44]

By 1869, the new controlling interests of the Hudson's Bay Company realized the advantages they could gain by surrendering their charter claims over Rupertsland to the new Canadian government; the Company directors could capitalize on the sale of land as the Canadian territory expanded west.[45] The Dominion of Canada recognized two possessory claims to Rupertsland. One claim was that granted to the HBC under its 1670 Charter. The other was the Aboriginal title claim defined in part by the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The Dominion government placed more emphasis on the Company's claim and negotiated a transfer of the Rupertsland territory to the Dominion of Canada in 1869.[46]

The Deed of Surrender was extremely favourable to the Hudson's Bay Company. In essence, the Company received both immediate compensation in the form of a £300,000 cash payment and future considerations via a land grant that amounted to almost seven million acres. The HBC also ensured that it would not be responsible in any way to the Aboriginal peoples, either by paying for land claims or by providing for their social welfare as they had prior to 1870.[47] However, for almost a century the people of mixed descent in Rupertsland had occupied a unique and specific economic role in the fur trade. The Deed of Surrender would amply compensate the share holders of the HBC, but at the same time it would undermine the economic position of the Métis traders and provisioners as well as the country-born officers and servants. In response, some of the economic elite of the Métis and country-born population chose the period of

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[44] H. Clare Pentland, *Labour and Capital in Canada, 1650-1860*, ed. Paul Phillips (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1981), 32.
[45] Innis, *Fur Trade*, 397.
[46] Tough, "Buying Out the Bay," 399.
[47] Tough, "Buying Out the Bay," 399-400.

relative confusion of the transfer of the territory in order to exert their economic and political influence and attempt to negotiate their own entrance into Dominion. Their goal was to maintain, or improve, their economic status in the territory and shift the balance of power more towards their favour.

The resistance in Red River between 1869 and 1870 has been examined from several perspectives. Some scholars, such as George Stanley, argued that the resistance was little more than a 'primitive' society reacting against their inevitable absorption into a more 'progressive' society.[48] Other scholars, such as Frits Pannekoek, argued that the resistance was, in reality, a civil war based on social conflicts that divided the English-speaking, Protestant Métis from the French-speaking, Catholic Métis.[49] However, the conflict was more complicated than either of these two perspectives suggest. The resistance, as Gerhard Ens argued, had important economic motivations that have often been ignored by scholars.

Ens examined the resistance by focusing on the differences between those men who supported Riel and those who opposed him. According to Ens, the men most likely to oppose Riel were the prominent Métis merchants, both Francophone and Anglophone, who were involved in the buffalo robe trade. Their opposition was based on two main economic motivations. First, they were opposed to Riel's illegal maneuvers. As Ens explained, "Given their business interests, these wealthy Métis merchants opposed theft, confiscations of property, or any disruption of the hunting and trading of furs and buffalo robes."[50] These men were also opposed to Riel because of his personal disfavour of the whiskey trade, which was an important component of the buffalo robe trade.[51] According to Ens, the economic motivations of Riel's opponents were reinforced by family connections and generational conflicts. Many of the

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[48] George Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961).
[49] Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance 1869-70* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1991).
[50] Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 130.
[51] Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 130.

opponents were related through marriage and many also sat on the Council of Assiniboia. As well, most of Riel's supporters were, on average, ten years younger than Riel's opponents.[52]

On the other hand, Ens argued that the majority of Riel's supporters were Hudson's Bay Company tripmen.[53] The Métis tripmen were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the Company after the 1821 merger and the attempts by the Company to impose more rigorous stratification within the employment hierarchy. The tripmen's dissatisfaction increased to such an extent that by the 1850s, labour mutinies were commonplace. By this time, the furs that were to be transported to the Hudson Bay were often stranded for an extra season at Norway House where many tripmen deserted the service and returned to the plains to hunt buffalo. Additionally, Ens argued that these tripmen rarely held legal title to their river lots. As such, they were concerned with the possibility of losing their land rights in Rupertsland and, therefore, were more likely to support Riel's efforts.[54]

Ens' economic perspective is an important contribution to the understanding of the Red River resistance; however, there are some weaknesses in his argument. For example, Ens alluded to the idea that some of Riel's opponents desired to initiate political union with Canada in order to capitalize on the high price of buffalo robes in Montreal.[55] Ens does not clarify, however, why these men were in opposition to Riel if they desired what Riel was trying to achieve — political union with Canada. It would seem likely that their opposition to Riel was based on factors other than attempts to improve their economic and political advantages. Ens' argument that the economic concerns of Riel's opponents were reinforced by generational conflict can perhaps be better explained by considering the importance of education in acts of labour militancy.

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[52] Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 130-4.
[53] Ens further suggested that the fact that the resistance began in October and November, after the freighting season had ended, was no mere coincidence. *Homeland to Hinterland*, 135.
[54] Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 136-7.
[55] Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 130.

To explain the rise and fall of labour militancy, H. Clare Pentland proposed that "industrial tension and conflict have waxed and waned, depending on whether the differential in capacity between the employer and employed is narrow or wide."[56] In other words, as long as their existed a gap between the education levels of the employers and the employees, as long as the employers could demonstrate a sophistication well above the employees, paternalism was accepted and labour movements were virtually non-existent. Even in pre-industrial times, the men who most successfully closed the employer-employee gap — the skilled artisans with their specialized skills and knowledge — were allowed to form guilds and, thus, exclude themselves from the most severe paternalistic labour relations.[57]

Following from this discussion, it seems logical that Riel and his most ardent supporters were young men, recently educated, who were most affected by the HBC's restructuring and also, perhaps, most aware of the inequalities between Red River and central Canada. The opposition between these two groups of men may have had less to do with age and more to do with experience and education. This idea is supported by a comment made by Ens concerning Riel's first experiences after returning to Red River from Montreal. Ens pointed out that when Riel first arrived back in 1868, he felt that the settlement had little to offer him and he considered relocating to St. Paul.[58] This detail is, perhaps, evidence of the underdevelopment of Red River at the hands of the HBC. The fact that Riel remained in Red River suggests that while he recognized the underdevelopment of the community, he also realized that he would have the opportunity to effect change during the period of confusion when control of Rupertsland would be transferred from the HBC to the Dominion of Canada.

A further weakness in Ens' argument concerns his depiction of the Métis tripmen — Riel's main supporters. He argued that the tripmen "were a volatile group with few loyalties to the Hudson's Bay Company" and he pointed to several 'labour

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[56] Pentland, "Canadian Industrial," 22.
[57] Pentland, "Canadian Industrial," 22.
[58] Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 134.

mutinies' that occurred during the 1850s as support.[59] However, Edith Burley provided a different explanation for the actions of the tripmen at this time. Burley argued that Company servants frequently reacted against what they considered was unfair treatment by the HBC officers. Their actions, their resistance, was not mutiny, however; it was, instead, an attempt to ensure that their service to the Company would allow them and their families to continue living as they were accustomed. This situation was even more intense for the tripmen as compared to other servants. As Burley explained:

> Tripmen spent an even smaller proportion of their lives in the HBC than contracted servants. They were seasonal employees and their service as boatmen could not be allowed to jeopardize their ability to support themselves the rest of the year. Nourishing food and protection against the elements ensured that working for the HBC did not damage their health. Even more important was timing, because the men spent the fall hunting on the plains to lay up a stock of food for the winter and they regularly tried to ensure that their voyages would be completed in good time.[60]

As such, it was not uncommon for the men to protest over increased loads or delays caused by shipments that had not arrived when expected. If these men believed that they would not be able to return home before the fall, then they did, at times, desert the service once they had reached Norway House.[61] While these tripmen may have been Riel's supporters, their support was not necessarily based upon animosity towards the HBC.

Ens also suggested that these tripmen supported Riel because they were less likely to have clear, legal title to their river lots. He suggested that only 26percent of Riel's supporters were land owners, while 42percent of Riel's opponents were land owners.[62] These numbers, however, seem less significant when one considers those

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[59] Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 136. Other reports indicate that these labour mutinies actually occurred in the 1860s. See for example, Edith I. Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company: Work, Discipline, and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770-1879* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), 220.
[60] Burley, *Servants*, 220.
[61] Burley, *Servants*, 220-2.
[62] Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 137.

who were *not* land owners. According to Ens' statistics, 74percent of Riel's supporters did not own land but also 58percent of Riel's opponents did not own land either.[63] These figures suggest that many of the Métis people in Red River did not officially have title to their river lots. As such, the concern over land rights may have been common to many people in Red River, not just Riel's supporters. In other words, land ownership may not have been the most significant influence on the divisions between the people of mixed descent in Red River. While economic motivations played an important role in the Red River resistance, as Ens suggested, the resistance was more complex than he proposed.

Immanuel Wallerstein argued that even though class struggles are important for understanding reforms made to existing structures, there are also important struggles taking place *within* classes, in particular the dominant class. While inter-class struggles are generally concerned with the reform and modification of the existing system, intra-class struggles are generally concerned with replacing the existing structure. Wallerstein further argued that most revolutionary and nationalist movements are, in fact, intra-class struggles among the elite of a society located in the semi-periphery of the world capitalist system. These intra-class struggles often involve the use of 'universalizing ideological slogans' in order for a capital accumulator to get the working class on his side.[64] As Wallerstein explained:

> The nationalist movements focused on the conflicts between the numerous 'oppressed peoples' (defined in terms of linguistic and/or religious characteristics) and the particular dominant 'peoples' of a given political jurisdiction, the former having far fewer political rights, economic opportunities, and legitimate forms of cultural expression than the latter. These movements insisted that the allocation of 'rights' was fundamentally inegalitarian, oppressive, and unjust. It was natural that such movements should first emerge in those semiperipheral regions of the world-economy ... where the uneven assignment of ethno-national groups in the hierarchy of labour-force allocation was most obvious.[65]

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[63] Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 137.
[64] Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 62-3.
[65] Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, 67-8.

The strategy of these movements was to mobilize the popular forces with revolutionary or anti-systemic ideology; in other words, the leaders called for an end to the existing capitalistic system. Of course, by seizing state power, the nationalistic movement was, in effect, only shifting the balance of power to their favour as egalitarian structures are not efficient in the operation of capitalism and, as such, the only real changes to the structure concern who is in control.[66]

The characteristics of such intra-class struggles can be seen in the Red River resistance.[67] The majority of men who began the resistance were members of the Métis elite of Red River, a region that formed the semi-periphery initially to Britain and, after the Rupertsland transfer, to central Canada. The names of the men who were part of the Convention of Forty — the representatives responsible for drafting the list of rights that the Métis demanded as terms for the entrance of Rupertsland into the Dominion of Canada — were the names of many of the commercial and governing elite of Red River. For example, Louis Riel was the son of a respected free trader. Additionally, his mother was a member of the Lagimodiere family who were prominent land owners in Red River.[68] James Ross was the son of the respected historian Alexander Ross and was, himself, an influential figure in Red River politics.[69] John Sutherland became a Canadian senator after the resistance.[70] Thomas Bunn was the son of Dr. William Bunn.[71] Alfred Boyd was an English merchant who later became the first Provincial Secretary of Manitoba.[72] Ambroise Lépine was the son of a prominent buffalo hunter.[73]

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[66] Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, 68-9.
[67] Ron Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Métis and the Fur Trade: Class, Sexism and Racism in the Transition from 'Communism' to Capitalism," *Studies in Political Economy* 12 (1983), 65-6.
[68] D. N. Sprague and R. P. Frye, *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1983), 38; and, Maggie Siggins, *Riel: A Life of Revolution* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., 1994), 24.
[69] W. L. Morton, *Manitoba: The Birth of A Province*, Vol. I (Altona: Manitoba Record Society Publications, 1965), 6.
[70] Morton, *Manitoba*, 7
[71] Morton, *Manitoba*, 13.
[72] Morton, *Manitoba*, 12.
[73] Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 135.

Charles Nolin was an educated farmer, trader and merchant in Red River.[74] Finally, John Black was a judge for the District of Assiniboia.[75] Some of the leaders who participated in the provisional government were able to find popular support among the lower class of Red River by emphasizing that they were struggling against the oppressiveness of the Hudson's Bay Company. Additionally, they emphasized the possibility that when Canada assumed control of Rupertsland under the current transfer agreement, the rights of the Métis to their language, their religion and their land would be ignored.

While the leaders of the resistance were trying to shift the balance of power to their favour and were committed to negotiating entrance to the Dominion of Canada by 1870, they were not in total agreement as to how this shift should be accomplished, as Ens suggested.[76] However, the division that Ens explained by a difference in business and land interests can perhaps be better illustrated by examining the issues that divided the delegates of the Convention of Forty in February, 1870. The delegates were most concerned with two issues. The first issue was the HBC Deed of Surrender and the advantageous terms that the Company had received. The second issue was the entrance of the Red River community into Dominion and the political status that it would receive. Concerning the former issue, Louis Riel argued that the large amount of land granted to the HBC under the Deed of Surrender would only serve to allow the Company to continue its role of dominance over the peoples of Rupertsland. Riel stated:

> We must not regard the Company as something detestable. At the same time we must bear in mind that the public interests much be above those of the Company. I object to this getting one-twentieth of the land as is proposed, — as it would give them a very unreasonable influence in the country. It would perhaps enable them to double the number of their Forts and their influence against the people. It meant five acres out of 100, and is, in my opinion, altogether too large. With greatly increased influence wielded by the Company, what would be the result?

[74] Bumsted, *The Red River Rebellion*, 311-2.
[75] Morton, *Manitoba*, 8.
[76] Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 138.

> ... I do not say that the Company should be crushed, for they are a source of power in this country, but we must keep them on the same footing as the other merchants.[77]

Riel was trying to demonstrate the power that the Company already had in Rupertsland and the potential for it to gain even more after the transfer. It is clear that his concern was to ensure that the other merchants in Red River, including the free traders, would have at least some economic power and influence in the new Canadian territory.

However, Riel could not defeat the sense of duty that many of the moderate delegates felt towards the company after experiencing a century of paternalism and care under personal labour organization. As Judge John Black replied:

> I have but to ask every one of you to say from your own experience whether the Hudson's Bay Company in this country can fairly be described ... as a Company who with a father's hand have led and often even fed you on many occasions? Let me hope that that past will not be wholly forgotten. If there are any in this assembly who do forget it, and if through such forgetfulness the Company, like the King of old, is to be taught by bitter experience, "how hard it is to have a thankless child," — yet the Company may under the smart of such fearful experience, draw consolation from the thought, that even if it should be so, it will not be the first time in the history of the world that the best of friends have been forgotten, and the most bountiful and generous benefactors been abased.[78]

The references to the HBC as a father and its employees as well cared for children clearly demonstrate the acceptance of the Company's paternalism by many of the people in Rupertsland. The socialization process that was an important aspect of personal labour organization was effective in maintaining the dominance of the Company.[79]

The concern over land encompassed another issue as well. Many of the mixed descent inhabitants of Red River had established agricultural plots based on the river lot system of New France. As long as mercantile interests were controlling the Red River economy, the river lot system was not opposed. River lots allowed each property direct

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[77] Morton, *Manitoba*, 19.
[78] Morton, *Manitoba*, 22.
[79] Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail,'* 6-7.

access to the river. As such, all properties had easy access to irrigation and to transportation. This system allowed all land owners access to a potential means of production. As long as the fur trading mercantilists remained concerned only with the exchange of commodities, the river lot system was not opposed because the mercantilists were not concerned with controlling the means of production in Rupertsland. However, the Dominion of Canada desired western expansion to serve the industrialization of central Canada. As such, these industrial capitalists would need to establish direct control of the means of production. The grid system used by the Dominion government in Ontario, which surveyed land into square blocks, interfered with the land owners' access to the means of production by denying the majority of them direct access to a waterfront for irrigation and transportation. The proposed Rupertsland transfer did not provide for protection for the river lot system and, as such, threatened the ability of the land owners and elite of Red River to control a means of production.

The second issue that divided the Convention of Forty, the political status of the Red River settlement in the Canadian Dominion was more complex. The leader of the country-born delegates, James Ross, argued that Red River would benefit most by entering into Dominion with territorial status. He was concerned that Rupertsland would be at a distinct disadvantage to the other provinces as the new province would have a small population and considerable inexperience in governing their own affairs.[80] Ross was also concerned with the current underdevelopment of Rupertsland and the serious effects this situation would have on the short term goals of the settlement.[81] Louis Riel, on the other hand, recognized the dominant influence of land in the establishment of effective self-government. Riel anticipated that the sale of lands would create a new source of wealth and would provide a means of developing the Red River settlement. As such, he argued that provincial status would benefit the settlers of

[80] Morton, *Manitoba*, 6-7.
[81] Morton, *Manitoba*, 9, 13-5.

Rupertsland far more than would territorial status.[82] This resolution was also narrowly defeated by the Convention, although Manitoba was eventually admitted to Confederation as a province.

After considerable negotiations between the provisional government of Red River and the government of Canada, the *Manitoba Act* was signed by the governor-general of Canada on May 12, 1870 and Manitoba was admitted to the Dominion. Métis land rights were recognized in the Act and subsequently land and money scrip were developed to compensate for this right. A struggle that had been initiated by the economic elite of the mixed descent population in Rupertsland as an attempt to shift the balance of power in their favour developed into a struggle with nationalistic overtones. While the end result would bring little long term economic benefits to the Métis and country-born people of Rupertsland, their struggles of 1869 to 1870 would solidify their identity as a unique and separate people.

Conclusion

The resistance of the Métis to the unilateral actions of the HBC Board of Directors was a reaction to the changing economic system in Rupertsland that was making obsolete the unique role and position of the Métis people. The reasons behind the resistance were reminiscent of the upsurge of labour militancy in Britain from 1918 to 1919. This labour militancy was a reaction to the trend of British legislation that formally acknowledged the equality between employer and employee but was not truly being recognized in the work place. Although the labour relations in the work place had not changed from those characteristic of the two centuries previous, the employees began to question these labour relations as education systems and public opinion changed. As the employees began to understand their own important contribution to the

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[82] Morton, *Manitoba*, 6-9; and Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail,'* 6.

successful operations of their employers' companies, they became unwilling to accept an inferior relationship to their employer.[83]

This type of labour militancy began to occur in Rupertsland after the 1821 merger, starting with the free trade movement and culminating in the establishment of the provisional government in 1869 and 1870. The servants of mixed descent, especially the sons of officers, were steadily increasing their understanding of the British economic and labour system, while the Métis and country-born labourers were realizing the importance of their unique skills and knowledge to the fur trade. As such, when the Company began to restructure the fur trade after 1821 and threatened the usefulness of the Métis skills and the status and prestige of the country-born employees, the elite of the mixed descent population of Rupertsland began to band together and fight for their economic rights.

Clearly, the 1869-70 resistance was motivated economically. It was initiated by the elite of the mixed descent population as it was these men who were in the most advantageous position to not only recognize the inequity of the Company's actions, but also to act upon it. It was these men who had enough power and status (achieved through economic position and education) to organize an effective resistance. In this sense, then, the Métis resistance was an attempt to shift the balance of power so that the London Board of Directors and the industrial capitalists of central Canada were not the only men profiting from the transfer of land. The delegates of the Convention of Forty wanted to ensure that a portion of the Company's economic and political gains would remain in Rupertsland and become centered in Red River in order that they might continue to accumulate capital.

While the 1869-70 resistance was, in essence, an intra-class struggle between the elite of Rupertsland and the elite of central Canada, it took on nationalistic tones for an important reason. Wallerstein argued that when intra-class struggles become concerned with replacing the existing economic structure (as was the case in Red River), the

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[83] Pentland, "Canadian Industrial," 22.

leaders of the resistance often use 'universalizing ideological slogans' in order to gain the support of the working class.[84] Therefore, the leaders of the resistance chose to emphasize their unique identity as mixed descent people and their opposition (defined by their ancestry) at the hands of the new controlling interests of the Hudson's Bay Company. Although ultimately the 1869-70 Métis resistance did not achieve any lasting economic and political advantages for the people of mixed descent, it did succeed in solidifying a unique Métis identity that was, and continues to be, formally acknowledged by the Canadian government.

Personal labour organization was an important catalyst in the development of a mixed descent elite in Red River. However, as will be made clear in the next chapter, personal labour organization did not always lead to the development of a distinct mixed descent population.

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[84] Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*, 63.

Chapter Six: Identity and the Mixed Descent Population of Australia

The economic and labour relations established under personal labour organization in the northern Australian cattle industry, much like those in the Rupertsland fur trade, encouraged the employers to carry the social overhead costs of their employees and maintain a system of rigid employment hierarchies through paternalistic management techniques. Additionally, the Aboriginal and European contacts established through these two industries encouraged the creation of a significant mixed descent population. However, the external influences that shaped the inter-racial relationships in the Rupertsland fur trade and the northern Australian cattle industry varied to such an extent that it was only in the fur trade that the mixed descent population was able to develop and express a unique identity.

The economic system, and external influences, of the fur trade allowed the mixed descent population in Rupertsland to gain economic status and political prestige through the influence of their fathers. This status and prestige allowed some of these individuals to begin to accumulate capital and eventually led to the expression of their unique identity as a separate people when their position in Rupertsland was threatened by outside interests. On the other hand, while the economic system of the northern Australian cattle industry allowed the mixed descent population to gain a limited economic status within the industry, the external influences that helped shape the industry hindered the development and expression of a unique identity by this mixed descent population. The most significant of these external influences encompassed three general areas: the economic ideals of the British and, as such, the importance of land ownership to the industries, the economic opportunities of the peoples of mixed descent, the process of formally educating the Aboriginal peoples and the time depth of contact experienced in both industries. The differences in these influences between

Rupertsland and northern Australia help explain why it was only in Rupertsland that a unique Métis identity was developed and expressed.

Families and Inter-racial relationships in the Northern Australian Cattle Industry

The pastoral expansion into northern Australia was gradual and sporadic and did not begin until the 1840s in Queensland and the 1880s in the Northern Territory.[1] Initially, the pastoralists relied upon non-Aboriginal labour sources to run their stations. However, when the gold mining industry began to develop rapidly in the north, much of the non-Aboriginal labour sources were engaged in this manner and, therefore, the pastoral industry faced an immense shortage of labour.[2] Eventually, the pastoralists turned to the Aboriginal peoples as a source of labour and by the mid 1880s over half of the employees on northern cattle stations were Aboriginal.[3] Due to the economic conditions faced by the northern pastoralists, the cattle industry operated under a system of personal labour organization which was maintained by a system of paternalistic management techniques.

The cattle stations adhered to a strict hierarchical employment structure. At the top of the hierarchy was, of course, the station manager followed by those Anglo-Australian men responsible for the various aspects of administration. Those men who offered specialized skills, such as the blacksmith, the mechanic and the saddler, maintained a higher status than the stock workers, but were not at the level of the manager or administrators. Among the stock workers, the head stockman was given the most responsibilities and status, and was almost always Anglo-Australian, although

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[1] Dawn May, *Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry: Queensland from White Settlement to the Present* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1994), 24; and, Ciaran O'Faircheallaigh, *The Northern Territory Economy: Growth and Structure 1965 - 1985* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1987), 14.

[2] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 34.

[3] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 45; and, Robert Miles, *Capitalism and Unfree Labour: Anomaly or necessity?* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1987), 107.

occasionally a man of mixed descent might be appointed to this role. The Aboriginal stock workers were positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy.[4] Even on the most remote out-stations this rigid hierarchy was strictly maintained.[5]

Paternalistic management techniques were used to justify and maintain this hierarchy. Many pastoralists voiced the opinion that the Aboriginal workers were child-like and needed to be constantly supervised. Others argued that they were a dying race and, therefore, the manner in which they were treated was of little concern. Many pastoralists also argued that Aboriginal men did not respond to kindness, only a 'firm hand.' As a result, violence as a means of coercion and a physical demonstration of Anglo-Australian authority began to dominate the relations of production within the cattle industry.[6] Even those pastoralists who did not resort to violence continued to maintain a social distance between themselves and the Aboriginal labourers, often only speaking to the labourers when orders needed to be given.[7]

Violence also accomplished another important task in northern Australia, as was discussed previously. The pastoralists, unlike the fur traders in Rupertsland, were concerned with the production of a commodity. As a result, the pastoralists needed to establish absolute control of the means of production, which in this case was the land.[8] As a result, the Aboriginal people in northern Australia became obstacles to the colonization efforts of the pastoralists.[9] However, the Aboriginal peoples remained crucial to the success of the cattle industry. As such, violence became a mechanism whereby the pastoralists could physically demonstrate Anglo-Australian superiority

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[4] L.A. Riddett, *Kine, Kin and Country: The Victoria River District of the Northern Territory, 1911 - 1966* (Australia: Australian National University Press, 1990), 95.

[5] Myrna Tonkinson, "Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude? Black Women and White Women on the Australian Frontier," *Aboriginal History* Vol. 12, No. 1 (1988), 29.

[6] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 96-8; Ann McGrath, "'Spinifex Fairies': Aboriginal Workers in the Northern Territory, 1911-39," in *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978* (Australia: Fontana Books, 1980), 256; and, Ann McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle': Aborigines in Cattle Country* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 95-121.

[7] Tonkinson, "Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude?" 30.

[8] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. I, ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 271-4.

[9] C.D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society: Aboriginal Policy and Practice -- Volume I* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970), 13.

even though they remained dependent upon the Aboriginal people from whom they had appropriated the land. This dichotomy, in turn, led to complex relationships between the Anglo-Australian and Aboriginal peoples in northern Australia and impacted on the growing mixed descent population.

The relationships between Anglo-Australian and Aboriginal men were predominantly based along economic lines and, as such, Aboriginal inferiority remained undeniable to the general, Anglo-Australian public. The relationships between Anglo-Australian men and Aboriginal women, however, were more complex. While most pastoralists grudgingly accepted the important economic roles that the Aboriginal women fulfilled on the stations, many also desired sexual relations with these women, even though officially, these acts were deemed socially undesirable. As Myrna Tonkinson explained:

> There was official disapproval of sexual liaisons between White men and Black women, and, in certain circles, social ostracism could be the fate of a White man who was known to have sexual relationships with Black women ... Such relationships were seldom based on equality. In some cases intimacy between an Aboriginal woman and a White man would be concealed by their behaving in front of visitors as master and servant. But often this was no mere pretence because in actuality the White man simply exercised his droit de seigneur with women in his employ.[10]

In order to justify the continuing occurrence of sexual relationships between Anglo-Australian men and Aboriginal women, many began to emphasize the 'physical necessity' of the relationships for the men and, additionally, to emphasize the differences between the European and Aboriginal women.[11]

Anglo-Australian women were characterized as delicate, calm, clean and unable to work in the northern climate. It was argued that they endured sexual intercourse for the sake of their husbands, although they did not enjoy it themselves. Aboriginal women, on the other hand, were characterized as being able to undertake the work of a

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[10] Tonkinson, "Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude?" 30.
[11] Tonkinson, "Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude?" 33; and, McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle'*, 70-1.

man, to thrive in the wild tropics and to be sexually uninhibited. These stereotypes were completely inaccurate; however, they served to justify the use of Aboriginal women as labourers and sexual partners by the station managers.[12] The relationships between Aboriginal women and Anglo-Australian women were even more confusing. As Ann McGrath explained:

> white women perceived Aboriginal women as a threat, not only sexually, but because they were in many ways better adjusted, more knowledgeable and capable in their environment. Despite the vital role played by Aboriginal women, they were viewed by policy-makers as the main obstacle to desired 'progress' for the Northern Territory. In an attempt to minimize the reliance upon black women, administrators repeatedly emphasised the need to attract white women.[13]

The ambivalent relationship that was created between the Anglo-Australians and the Aboriginal women in the cattle industry, had an important influence on the absence of a mixed descent identity in Australia.

Economic Opportunities for Mixed Descent Children in the Cattle Industry

Similar to the Rupertsland fur trade, the pastoralists in northern Australia often identified the mixed descent population as distinct from the rest of the Aboriginal population. For example, on the Victoria River District Station the employees of mixed descent were noted separately in the station register and were paid differently than other Aboriginal employees.[14] As the mixed descent population grew, they were able to obtain a higher status in the employment hierarchy of the stations to a limited degree; some even became head stockmen.[15] Even though the mixed descent population had

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[12] Tonkinson, "Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude?" 33.
[13] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 50.
[14] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle,'* 30.
[15] Tim Rowse, "'Were You Ever Savages?' Aboriginal Insiders and Pastoralist Patronage," *Oceania* Vol. 58, No. 1 (1987), 89.

more economic possibilities available to them, they were in no way considered equal to the Anglo-Australian settlers.[16] As Frank Stevens explained:

> Occasionally stations also accommodated a number of half-caste families, which led a life somewhere in between the Aboriginal and white community, depending on the attitudes of the management towards them. Normally they were treated with more consideration than the Aborigines; but unless they were children of one of the European employees on the station, or of the manager or owner himself, never as liberally as a white employee, regardless of their contribution to, or position on, the station.[17]

Some mixed descent people were also provided with European type accommodation, although it was generally still inferior to the accommodation provided to Anglo-Australian employees and segregated from the main homestead.[18] Similar to the early years of the Rupertsland fur trade, the men of mixed descent in northern Australia did not always benefit from their fathers' position and status within the cattle industry.[19]

The casual sexual relationships between Anglo-Australian men and Aboriginal women, and the stringent attitudes of the general Anglo-Australian public concerning these relationships, often encouraged the men to deny the paternity of any mixed descent children they might have fathered.[20] There was a growing sentiment that the mixed descent children had inherited the 'worst traits of both races.'[21] As J. W. Bleakley, Chief Protector of Aborigines in Queensland, wrote:

> One naturally to be expected result of the unfortunate contact with the worst elements of the white and yellow races, was the bringing into the world of that much to be pitied little mortal, the half-caste child. This unfortunate being grew up, doubtless, to curse the irresponsible father who caused him to be branded,

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[16] C.D. Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines: Aboriginal Policy and Practice — Volume III* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971), 40.
[17] Frank Stevens, *Aborigines in the Northern Territory Cattle Industry* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), 129.
[18] Stevens, *Aborigines*, 131.
[19] Tonkinson, "Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude?" 34.
[20] Tonkinson, "Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude?" 30.
[21] Tonkinson, "Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude?" 32.

> often by both sides of his parentage, with the cruel stigma of being neither one thing nor the other.[22]

The continually increasing mixed descent population became an embarrassment to the Australian government and, as such, the government officials began to legislate the removal of mixed descent children, in particular the girls, from their parents, placing them in a government or missionary run institution. Here, the children were to receive an education and be 'civilized' in order to join the dominant, Anglo-Australian society.[23]

The mixed descent population, however, was never truly accepted into the dominant society until long after the removal policy was abandoned. Government policy dictated a strict segregation of the mixed descent population, from both the Anglo-Australian and the Aboriginal communities, and began to classify the population according to the 'preponderance of blood' that an individual possessed. Those individuals with a preponderance of Aboriginal blood could be trained for station work, while those with a preponderance of European blood could be trained for work as servants in a remote, urban environment such as Darwin. It was important to keep the mixed descent children completely segregated from the Aboriginal community so that the 'call of the blood' could be avoided.[24] In Queensland, the classification of mixed descent people according to the 'preponderance of blood' that an individual possessed, led to the possibility of exemption from regulations of the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897* for those with a preponderance of European blood. However, this exemption could be revoked at any time for an infraction as simple as associating with Aboriginal people.[25] In deciding which individuals were 'qualified' for exemption, the courts refused to take into consideration any genealogies

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[22] J. W. Bleakley, *The Aborigines of Australia: Their History — Their Habits — Their Assimilation* (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1961), 137.
[23] Bleakley, *Aborigines of Australia*, 34; May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 122; McGrath, "'Spinifex Fairies'," 245; McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle'*, 90-94; and, Riddett, *Kine, Kin and Country*, 115.
[24] Bleakley, *Aborigines of Australia*, 308; and, Rowley, *Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, 265.
[25] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 131; and, C.D. Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia: Aboriginal Policy and Practice — Volume II* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971), 46.

presented, relying only on the physical appearance of the individuals. This practice was not ended until 1965.[26] As the amount of restrictive legislation increased, the economic opportunities for the people of mixed descent decreased. Gradually, pastoralists began to view the employment of mixed descent people as increasingly complicated and inviting too much government interference into the station operations than was desirable.[27]

Over time, individuals became classified as Aboriginal by appearance and association. This arbitrary classification of Aboriginality led to confusion among many mixed descent people concerning their identity. As Ann McGrath explained, "They were blamed for their colour, and consequently must have become very confused about their identity. They were taught that their relatives were dirty and primitive, but were given little to like in their new environment, and although learning to 'think like whites', were not accepted by them as equals."[28] Thus, many mixed descent people began to identify themselves as Aboriginal or Anglo-Australian according to their physical appearance.

The 1920 Recession and the Decline of Personal Labour Organization

In the early 1920s a deep economic recession hit the cattle industry which had a profound impact on the economic and labour relations previously established and, in essence, initiated the gradual decline of personal labour organization in the industry. During the recession the station managers began to deduct the costs of living from the employees' wages. As Dawn May explained, "this practice relieved the station operators of the responsibility of maintaining their permanent employees. The cost was borne by the Aboriginal workers themselves."[29] Additionally, the station managers

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[26] Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia*, 5, 45-6.
[27] Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia*, 187.
[28] McGrath, *'Born in the Cattle'*, 94.
[29] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 119.

began to believe that they could no longer afford to cover the social overhead costs of the unemployed dependents of the Aboriginal labourers. As a result, many of the residents of the station camps were removed to government or missionary run settlements.[30] Thus, the removal policy that initially only applied to the children of mixed descent, began to be applied to any unemployed Aboriginal person.

The government and mission settlements quickly took on an important economic role. Although the station managers were no longer in a position to cover the social overhead costs of their employees' dependents, they still needed a reliable source of labour. The settlements became an excellent device for ensuring that a sufficient number of Aboriginal labourers remained in the areas where it was most needed.[31] The social overhead costs that had previously been covered by the station managers were transferred to the settlement operators. When the Aboriginal labourers contracted out to work on the stations, they left behind their dependents to be cared for on the settlements. As such, not only were the dependents no longer a concern of the station managers, they could now justify paying only the wages of a single man to their Aboriginal labourers, whereas before they were paying the labourers more depending upon the number of dependents each man supported.[32] The children left behind at the settlements, were provided with a basic education and were taught 'appropriate' skills, such that when they were old enough, they too were contracted out to employers.[33] In this way, the government and mission settlements became institutional labour pools.

The labour relations of the cattle industry began to change slowly after the recession in the 1920s. However, as long as the government and mission settlements functioned effectively as institutional labour pools, the paternalistic management techniques that characterized the early labour relations remained largely intact. It was not until forty years later that dramatic changes occurred in the economic and labour

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[30] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 114.
[31] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 122.
[32] Rowley, *Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, 221; Rowley, *Outcasts in White Australia*, 65-6; and, Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines*, 231.
[33] McGrath, "'Spinifex Fairies'," 245.

relations of the cattle industry. In the 1950s, the militant union movement and the Communist Party began to expose the conditions faced by the Aboriginal labourers in the industry. Unlike previous attempts to include the Aboriginal workers in the Station Hands Award for wages, which were initiated in the hopes of excluding Aboriginal workers from the stations, the movements in the 1950s and 1960s were initiated in an effort to bring the Aboriginal people into the working class of Australia.[34] It was not until 1971 that all of the discriminatory clauses were removed from Australian employment legislation; however, this was made possible after an agreement was reached in 1967 to remove the 'slow worker' clauses from the Station Hand Awards, shortly after the Aboriginal stock workers demonstrated their economic and political influence through a series of strikes.[35]

The Wave Hill Strike and the Struggle for Aboriginal Rights

When Darwin was bombed in 1942, the Northern Territory came under military control. While this had little effect on the most remote cattle stations, those that were not so remote began to face serious competition for Aboriginal labour. The military, unlike most cattle stations, was willing to pay wages consistently, provide an adequate amount of quality food and provide care for the dependents of its Aboriginal work force. The experiences of the Aboriginal labourers on the army settlements was vastly different from their experiences on most cattle stations and proved to be pivotal in the movement towards Aboriginal rights.[36] While employed by the army, the Aboriginal labourers worked eight and a half hours a day, five and a half days a week. They were paid a cash wage every two weeks which was not restricted in any way. In addition to

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[34] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 160.
[35] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 166-8.
[36] Ronald M. Berndt and Catherine H. Berndt, *End of an Era: Aboriginal Labour in the Northern Territory* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1987), 11, 177; and, Rowley, *Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, 339.

their cash wage, the employees also received good quality food (including vegetables and milk), tobacco, clothes, work boots when needed, ground-sheets, and blankets.[37] The Aboriginal military employees finally experienced the working conditions that most Anglo-Australians took for granted.

The Aboriginal people were required to build their own housing under officer supervision; however, proper materials were provided and, as such, the housing was waterproof and of adequate size.[38] Two of the military settlements also had elementary schools with Aboriginal teachers. The children were taught reading, writing, math and drawing on a limited basis, as the teachers themselves only had a limited educational background. Official enthusiasm for the schools was lacking, however, and, therefore, the teachers gradually became discouraged.[39] While socio-economic barriers continued to exist on the military settlements as they did on the cattle stations, the racial lines that marked the barriers on the cattle stations were blurred on the military settlements. The rules of the military applied to all, Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian alike.[40]

World War II and the involvement of Aboriginal labour in the military was an important part of the history of Aboriginal labour relations in northern Australia. While those who were employed by the military experienced more positive working conditions, even those who remained employed on cattle stations throughout the war experienced an improvement in labour relations. New markets opened and the pastoral industry strengthened. Labour shortages and competition from the military improved the economic bargaining power of the Aboriginal labourer on the cattle station. Chinese and Japanese men who had previously found employment on the stations as cooks or gardeners were removed during the war and Aboriginal people increasingly began to perform these roles. As well, an increased shortage of Anglo-Australian labour during the war allowed some of the Aboriginal people to assume positions of authority.[41]

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[37] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 164.
[38] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 165.
[39] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 170-1.
[40] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 177.
[41] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 147-8.

After the war, the military settlements were disbanded and many of the Aboriginal people returned to work in the pastoral industry and the northern urban centers. Additionally, Anglo-Australian workers returned to the pastoral industry and, as such, the Aboriginal peoples were forced to relinquish their positions of authority. Advances in technology also began to impact on the cattle industry at this time. A network of roads (aided by military improvements during the war) improved the transportation of beef to market. Airplanes were beginning to be used more frequently to transport people and supplies and improved communications allowed the protective legislation concerning Aboriginal people to be enforced more regularly.[42] A complete return to pre-war employment conditions in the cattle industry was no longer acceptable.

Shortly following the war, agitation among Aboriginal workers and efforts by various labour unions in the north began to change the government's Aboriginal policies. Investigations of Aboriginal employment conditions in the pastoral industry led to recommendations by the Department of Native Affairs for an increase in the cash wages and an improvement in the living conditions for Aboriginal station workers.[43] A conference was held in January 1947 at Alice Springs between the government and the pastoralists to discuss Aboriginal employment in the Northern Territory's pastoral industry. Issues such as wages, accommodation and facilities for Aboriginal employees were discussed and agreements were reached. As Ronald and Catherine Berndt explained:

> This conference was an attempt to establish an improved standard of employment for Aborigines in the pastoral industry in the Territory. It was an historic meeting in as much as it was the first of its kind ever held, which took into consideration the fact that in the past as a general rule (exceptions notwithstanding) no actual and regular cash payment had been made to Aboriginal employees. Low as the wages were, they represented a tremendous

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[42] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 150-2; and Rowley, *Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, 338-9.
[43] Pamela Lyon and Michael Parsons, *We are Staying: The Alyawarre Struggle for Land at Lake Nash* (Alice Springs: I. A. D. Press, 1989), 30.

advancement and in fact opened the door for negotiation in future years.[44]

Following this conference, legislation was passed to implement the agreements reached and government policy began to change.

In 1947, the *Aboriginals Ordinance* was passed to implement the payment of wages to Aboriginal stock workers. It also initiated pay step increases to allow more experienced workers to earn a higher wage, up to a set amount. At the same time, this amendment only required station management to provide rations for each male employee and his wife and one child. In 1949, the *Aboriginals (Pastoral Industry) Regulations* continued with the provisions of the 1947 Ordinance and further regulated the provision of rations to Aboriginal employees and dependents, which were now to be equivalent to the rations provided to Anglo-Australian employees. Additionally, a minimum standard of accommodation was set for Aboriginal employees and their dependents.[45] However, these new regulations were not well enforced and, therefore, many pastoralists simply ignored the legislation.

In January of 1965, the Australian Council of Trade Unions submitted an application to the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission to remove references to Aboriginal employees in the *Cattle Station Industry (Northern Territory) Award* of 1951 which prevented Aboriginal employees from receiving award wages.[46] The unions argued that the protectionist legislation was only interfering with the ability of the Aboriginal peoples to compete in the job market. The pastoralists, however, submitted that they simply would not hire Aboriginal people if they were forced to pay them equal wages. They argued that very few Aboriginal people had the capability and initiative of other Anglo-Australian workers and, therefore, should not be paid an equivalent wage.

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[44] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 260.
[45] Australian Archives, A 432/57 Part 1, "Report of the Conference Held 8 January, 1947, Alice Springs," 1-19; A 432/57 Part 2, "Regulations Under the Aboriginals Ordinance 1918-1947," 21 June, 1949, 1-9; and, A 452/1, "Maintenance of Dependants [sic] of Aborigines on Pastoral Leases," 1954, 1-4.
[46] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 261.

Those few Aboriginal employees who did display similar capabilities and initiative as the Anglo-Australian employees were already receiving the award wage.[47]

The Commission reached its decision in March, 1966. While they agreed that there was a need to remove the racial clauses from the Award wages, they also accepted the argument of mass unemployment put forth by the pastoralists. As such, they recommended that a 'slow workers' clause be included in the legislation for 'less productive employees.'[48] In defence of this decision, the Commission argued that,

> if the slow workers' clause were [sic] made simpler pastoralists might be able to apply for slow workers' permits for individual employees. This would undoubtedly cause greater administrative problems on the stations than would the success of the employers' claim, but if by this means particular natives on individual stations were given slow workers' permits within the normal concept of slow workers then the degree of disemployment could be less.[49]

In other words, the Commission believed that if it was easier for the pastoralists to receive slow workers' permits for their Aboriginal employees, less Aboriginal people would be laid off. The Commission set December 1, 1968 as the date upon which their decision was to be implemented.[50] Neither the unions nor the pastoralists were satisfied with the Arbitration Commission's decision and many pastoralists tried to stall the application of the award wage to their Aboriginal employees.[51] However, the Aboriginal employees were no longer willing to wait for the equal wages that may or may not be paid by the station management.

Prior to and shortly after the Australian Council of Trade Union's application for equal wages, some Aboriginal stock workers initiated small-scale strikes. For example, in May 1946, the first of the Pilbara strikes in Western Australia began; in February 1949, the employees at the Lake Nash station went on strike; and, in May 1966, the

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[47] Lyon and Parsons, *We are Staying*, 39.
[48] Lyon and Parsons, *We are Staying*, 43; and, Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines*, 328.
[49] In Commonwealth of Australia, "The Report of the Committee to Review the Situation of Aborigines on Pastoral Properties in the Northern Territory," December 1971, 15.
[50] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 261.
[51] Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines*, 329-30.

workers at Newcastle Waters walked off.[52] These strikes were voiced in the terms of a struggle for equal wages and better working conditions. Generally, the most active strike supporters were those Aboriginal people who worked on large company stations, not small family operations.[53] It would seem that those station managers who assumed all of the obligations inherent to paternalistic management, which would have been easiest for family owned and operated stations, had the most loyal employees. While these employees may have resisted unfair treatment, they were largely unwilling to try and change the entire employment scheme. When the Gurindji people walked off the Wave Hill Station on August 23, 1966, however, they were leaving a station owned and operated by a large, multinational company, Vesteys. The station manager at Wave Hill had not assumed all of the obligations inherent to paternalistic management. As such, the Gurindji people no longer accepted the rigid employment hierarchies and unfair treatment on the station. For the first time, these Aboriginal people spoke not only of their right to equal wages and better working conditions but also of their right to control their own lives and their own land.[54]

The Australian Investment Agency, more commonly referred to as Vesteys,[55] financed eleven cattle stations in the Northern Territory and several more in both Queensland and Western Australia. The Wave Hill station was the coordinating center of the central western Vesteys properties.[56] In 1944, the Vesteys company hired two anthropologists, Ronald and Catherine Berndt, to visit the station properties and give recommendations concerning how best to attract Aboriginal labourers to the stations in

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[52] Frank Hardy, *The Unlucky Australians* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Ltd., 1968), 32; and, Lyon and Parsons, *We are Staying*, 30, 32-3.

[53] Deborah Bird Rose, *Hidden Histories: Black Stories from Victoria River Downs, Humbert River and Wave Hill Stations* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1991), xxiv.

[54] J.K. Doolan, "Walk-off (and later return) of various Aboriginal groups from cattle stations: Victoria River District, Northern Territory," in *Aborigines and Change: Australia in the '70s*, ed. R.M. Berndt (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1977), 107; Hardy, *The Unlucky Australians*, 101; and, Lyon and Parsons, *We are Staying*, 45-6.

[55] Vesteys is a large company based in Britain. In 1980, it was the largest privately-owned multi-national company in the world. It had firms in 27 countries covering all the continents. Interestingly, between the years 1942 and 1952, Vesteys was exempt from paying taxes on its Australian cattle station income. Rose, *Hidden Histories*, 150.

[56] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 14-6, 57.

an effort to combat a steadily declining Aboriginal station population.[57] Although their recommendations were largely ignored by Vesteys, their study provides an illuminating glimpse into the employment conditions faced by the Aboriginal labourers on the Wave Hill station just prior to their strike.

Although legislation regarding Aboriginal employment was already in place in the mid 1940s when the Berndts were conducting their study, Vesteys was secure in its knowledge that only a minimum of supervision would occur and enforcement of the legislation would be limited. As such, Vesteys acted on the assumption that if the cost of caring for an employee's dependents exceeded the minimum wage set by the Territory government, then no wage actually had to be paid. Additionally, Vesteys employed many of the dependents as 'casual workers' in order to make improvements to their pastoral properties. These Aboriginal people were predominantly women and children who were paid nothing more than a small amount of extra tea and sugar in addition to their regular weekly rations. The Berndts discovered that Vesteys was good at recording employment and payment records in deceiving ways.[58]

In exchange for the hard work completed by the Aboriginal employees and their dependents, they received no wages and only scant quantities of food, clothing and miscellaneous articles, such as handkerchiefs, mirrors and combs. Employee rations included one slice of bread, one piece of meat and one cup of tea, three times a day, seven days a week. Kitchen employees were sometimes given the scraps during meal preparation and garden workers were sometimes given the discarded vegetables. These kitchen and garden scraps were considered extra to the regular diet of beef and bread and were shared amongst the entire Aboriginal camp. Dependents were provided with the bone and offal of butchered cattle and the employees usually, although not always, received cooked meat at meal times.[59]

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[57] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 14-5.
[58] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 62-3.
[59] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 70-4.

The Aboriginal people were allowed to gather 'bush food' from the property; however, time constraints made this difficult. The employees worked long hours and simply did not have the time to search for wild game. Many of the dependents in the Aboriginal camp were either too old, too young or too ill to go in search of food. Those dependents who were physically able to hunt wild game were expected to remain close to the main station in case they were needed for casual labour. Additionally, wild game was scarce in the vicinity of the cattle station, further frustrating the efforts of the Aboriginal peoples to supplement the diet provided by the station management.[60]

The living accommodations in the Aboriginal camp were also less than desirable. There were insufficient water sources (both for drinking and washing) and no latrines were made available to the Aboriginal peoples, including the Aboriginal employees. The Aboriginal people were expected to construct their own dwellings from various pieces of old, unused corrugated iron or tin. The Aboriginal people also improvised shelters using blankets and the limited vegetation available in the area.[61]

The employment conditions faced by the Aboriginal peoples on the Wave Hill station were less than ideal. The labour relations between the Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian employees on the station were also strained. The Anglo-Australian stock workers did not treat the Aboriginal men with respect and sexually abused the Aboriginal women.[62] There was little that the Aboriginal people could do to end this situation. As the Berndts explained, the Aboriginal stock workers complained "that they had no defence against unjust treatment. An Aboriginal who appealed to the manager against a European stockman would receive scant consideration. The policy was that for the sake of discipline and prestige a European's actions must be upheld."[63] In their report to the Vesteys company submitted in 1945, the Berndts predicted that "the feelings of Aboriginal stockboys foreboded future unrest and demonstrations of

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[60] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 75.
[61] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 79-80.
[62] Hardy, *The Unlucky Australians*, 71; and, Lyon and Parsons, *We Are Staying*, 45.
[63] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 67.

dissatisfaction far in excess of what existed then."[64] This prediction came true in 1966, when 200 Aboriginal employees and dependents walked off the Wave Hill Station in protest of their treatment at the hands of the Vesteys management and Anglo-Australian employees. While these Aboriginal people had initially accepted the paternalistic management techniques established under personal labour organization in the industry, the Vesteys company failed to provide the personal obligations it assumed under personal labour organization. As such, the Aboriginal employees took radical action against this unfair treatment.

The Gurindji people gave several reasons for their walk-off. They were frustrated with the working conditions that they were forced to endure: the minimal wages that they did not always receive, the atrocious accommodations, the insufficient rations and the rampant sexual abuse of the Aboriginal women at the hands of the Anglo-Australian employees.[65] The Gurindji also argued that even though they, as Aboriginal people, had been promised the payment of social benefits (such as pension payments and child endowment) since 1947, the payments were made to the Wave Hill station management and, as a result, the Gurindji never received the money.[66] While wages and working conditions were important issues in the Gurindji's struggle, they were also a means to successfully establish the support of the unions.[67] The most important reason for the strike, however, was the opportunity for the Gurindji people to once again control their own lives by regaining control of their traditional lands.[68]

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[64] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 67.

[65] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 265; Doolan, "Walk-off," 107; Hardy, *The Unlucky Australians*, 71; Lyon and Parsons, *We are Staying*, 45; and, Rose, *Hidden Histories*, 71.

[66] Doolan, "Walk-off," 107; and, Rose, *Hidden Histories*, 71. The Vesteys management was technically, although not in good faith, complying with the legislation that stated in part, "In the terms of the agreement child endowment was to be paid to the station owners in respect of children entitled thereto and the station will maintain such children to the extent of endowment received." Australian Archives, A 452/1, "Maintenance of Aboriginal Children on Pastoral Stations," 1954, 1.

[67] Hardy, *The Unlucky Australians*, 32; and, Rose, *Hidden Histories*, 141, 227.

[68] This position taken by the Gurindji people is reminiscent of Riel's arguments put forth to the members of the Convention of Forty. Riel, like the Gurindji, recognized the importance of land ownership to self-government and control over one's own destiny.

Approximately eight months after the Gurindji left the Wave Hill Station and took up residence at Wattie Creek they submitted a request to Governor-General Lord Casey seeking his aid in obtaining 500 square kilometers of their traditional land from the Vesteys' lease. The petition cited the Gurindji's traditional claim to the land, their dispossession without compensation and their experience of exploitation at the hands of the station management.[69] Although the Commonwealth government initially rejected the Gurindji's claim, pressures from other sources encouraged the adoption of a new government policy.

The Gurindji were one of the first Aboriginal groups in the Northern Territory to stage an extensive walk-off; however, several other groups joined the Gurindji at Wattie Creek in the succeeding years. Perhaps even more importantly, in December 1968 the Yirrkala people of Arnhem Land began a law suit against the Mirrilipum mining company and the Commonwealth of Australia for proceeding with mining activities without consulting or addressing the issues of the local Aboriginal peoples. As the Berndts explained, "Although they were quite separate manifestations, different in timing as well as in reasons, in combination they succeeded in redirecting government Aboriginal policies in ways that had not previously been considered seriously."[70] As such, with this new direction in Aboriginal policy, the Gurindji's claim was reconsidered and in January 1972, the Vesteys company agreed to negotiate the release of an area of suitable land to the Gurindji people. The Wattie Creek pastoral lease, consisting of 3100 square kilometers of land, was handed over to the Gurindji people on August 16, 1975, almost nine years after the Aboriginal people staged their strike. The Commonwealth government further extended its Aboriginal policy by enacting the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory)* in 1976. The Gurindji submitted a land claim to the Wattie Creek pastoral lease (now called Daguragu) under this act and in 1981 their claim was recommended.[71]

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[69] Lyon and Parsons, *We are Staying*, 46.
[70] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 265.
[71] Berndt and Berndt, *End of an Era*, 265-6; Doolan, "Walk-off," 110; Lyon and Parsons, *We are Staying*, 46; and Rose, *Hidden Histories*, 232.

The Gurindji of Wave Hill Station were among the first of the Aboriginal peoples to take action against the injustices that they had faced over the course of a century. Their wait was long, but it was calculated. As Manguari, one of the Gurindji strike leaders, explained to journalist Frank Hardy shortly after the strike began, "That Bestey mob neber bin teach Gurindji people to read, but now our childrens bin go to school house. Later on they bin learn ebrything and know what to do. Then we bin want this ground, all belonga we Gurindji. Childrens grow up proper book work. We wait for that, then no white man here."[72] According to Manguari, the Aboriginal people understood that the only means by which they could regain control of their lives was through reclaiming control of the land. The education that their children had been receiving at the hands of the missionary and government workers would allow them to take control of their lives and work towards their own goals without the supervision and paternalistic aid of the Australian Commonwealth.

The Wave Hill Strike, while one of the first Aboriginal land claims in Australia, never assumed the nationalistic tones that the Red River resistance did. As was discussed in a previous chapter, the leaders of the Red River resistance were trying to achieve a shift in the balance of power and, as such, used nationalistic themes as a means to unite the mixed descent people of Rupertsland in support of their cause. In northern Australia, however, the Aboriginal people, of both full and mixed descent, were blocked from accumulating capital and becoming members of the economic elite. As such, the Wave Hill Strike was an example of an inter-class struggle. Immanuel Wallerstein argued that struggles between the dominant and subordinate classes in a capitalist system (in other words, inter-class struggles) focus on reforming the existing system and are much less revolutionary in tone than are intra-class struggles.[73] In contrast to the Red River resistance, the characteristics of the Wave Hill Strike were more like those of inter-class struggles. While the Gurindji people wanted to improve

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[72] In the Gurindji language, there is no "v" sound. As such when speaking English, many of these people substitute the "b" sound instead. Hardy, *The Unlucky Australians*, 101.

[73] Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 62-3.

their employment opportunities and regain control of their traditional lands, they were not trying to replace the existing system, only reform it for their own benefit. The Gurindji used their Aboriginal identity to unify themselves, to generate support from the general Anglo-Australian public and to lend credence to their claim for land; however, they were virtually all members of the subordinate class and were trying to improve their position *within* the existing system, not trying to achieve a shift in the balance of power.

Conclusion

The Gurindji people of the Wave Hill Station were the first Aboriginal peoples in Australia to demand recognition of their rights as Aboriginal people in a concerted and directed effort. Their resistance to their inequitable treatment within the cattle industry and the denial of their land rights was a reaction to the failure of the Vesteys management to maintain the paternalistic management techniques necessary under a system of personal labour organization. The Gurindji people voiced their resistance in the terms of Aboriginal rights, regardless of the fact that some of their people were actually of mixed descent. Although the Gurindji people experienced the labour relations common to personal labour organization which emphasized the interdependencies of the Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian participants, as did the Aboriginal people of Rupertsland, the external influences that helped shape the development of the cattle industry and northern Australia differed from those influences that shaped the development of the fur trade and Rupertsland. As such, the mixed descent people of northern Australia joined the struggles of the rest of the Aboriginal population and never truly developed their own unique identity.

There were four external influences that had the most impact on the mixed descent populations of Rupertsland and northern Australia: the need of the colonial investors in regards to land tenure, the economic opportunities of the mixed descent

people within the industries, the educational opportunities open to the Aboriginal people and the time depth of contact in both industries. In northern Australia, the need of the pastoralists to establish absolute control of the land as a means of production, the limited opportunities of the mixed descent population to gain status, prestige and capital within the cattle industry, the eventual provision of a basic, western education to all Aboriginal children and a limited amount of time worked together to prohibit the development and expression of a unique mixed descent identity in northern Australia.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

In virtually every instance where Aboriginal and colonizing peoples met, a mixed descent population was created. Most often, these children of mixed descent were absorbed into either their mothers' or their fathers' society; however, occasionally, circumstances were such that the mixed descent population had the opportunity to draw together and form a unique identity of their own, distinct from either the Indigenous or colonizing society. The Métis of Canada are one of these few groups. Even though currently there are members of the Métis Nation in virtually all of the provinces and territories of Canada, a Métis identity was first expressed in a unified and cohesive manner in Red River.

Some scholars have argued that the Métis people of Canada derived their identity from their specialized role in the fur trade.[1] While this explanation is partly accurate, it is too simplistic to suggest that it was their experiences in the fur trade alone that provided for the basis of a Métis identity. It would be more accurate to suggest that the creation and expression of a Métis identity in Red River was dependent not only on the economic and labour relations developed in the Rupertsland fur trade, but also on the external factors that influenced the experiences of all Aboriginal peoples in the trade. The most important of these external influences included: the needs of the European traders in regards to exclusive control of the land; the economic opportunities of the people of mixed descent which allowed at least some of these men to accumulate capital; the educational experiences of the Aboriginal people; and, time depth of contact. All of these factors together encouraged the expression of a Métis identity in Red River.

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[1] See for example, Jacqueline Peterson, "Ethnogenesis: Settlement and Growth of a 'New People,'" *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* Vol. 6, No. 2 (1982); and, Jacqueline Peterson, "Many roads to Red River: Métis genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1815," in *The New Peoples: being and becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985).

The economic and labour relations that the Métis people experienced in Rupertsland were an important catalyst in the creation and expression of a unique identity. It was not these relations alone, however, that allowed for the expression of a Métis identity. Other industries, for example, the northern Australian cattle industry, developed similar economic and labour relations and yet did not experience the creation of a unique mixed descent identity. Even so, it is necessary to clearly understand the economic and labour relations of the Rupertsland fur trade and the northern Australian cattle industry in order to understand how other external influences contributed to or prohibited the creation and expression of a unique mixed descent identity.

H. Clare Pentland, a Canadian economic theorist, developed the most useful framework to examine the labour market conditions experienced by the participants in both the fur trade and the cattle industry. This framework also provided an explanation for the particular form of labour organization, which he called *personal labour organization*, that developed from these labour market conditions. Although Pentland did not apply his theory directly to Aboriginal — European labour relations in the fur trade or the cattle industry, the economic conditions faced by the participants in both these industries influenced them to accept personal labour organization as the most viable means of establishing a profitable operation.

Neither the Rupertsland fur trade nor the northern Australian cattle industry utilized the labour organization commonly found in urban Britain after the Industrial Revolution. In other words, neither industry made strict use of wage labour and impersonal relationships between the employer and his employees. This unique situation was largely due to the fact that there were two important differences between economic conditions in Industrial Britain and its colonies. First, the colonial employers faced a scarcity of labourers. As such, they had to develop a means to attract labourers while maintaining low operating costs. Second, the colonial investors faced widespread availability of inexpensive land. Land provided a potential means of production as well as status and prestige for the land owners. As such, very few labourers were willing to sell their labour power more than was necessary to save enough money to buy their own

land. Thus, not only did the colonial employers have to devise a method for attracting labourers at reasonable rates, but they also had to devise a method for ensuring that the labourers continued to work for extended periods of time. In several instances, including the Rupertsland fur trade and the northern Australian cattle industry, employers chose to organize their workforce according to the system of personal labour organization.

Personal labour organization was a system in which the employer accepted the social overhead costs of his employees. Stated simply, the employer provided assistance, over and above wages, to ensure that the employee could continue to participate in the work force.[2] Within the fur trade and the cattle industry, this assistance came in direct forms, such as provisioning and food relief, as well as indirect forms, such as the canceling of debts at the fur trade posts or cattle station stores. Often, this assistance was also extended to members of the immediate family as family welfare was an important factor in determining whether a labourer would remain willing to work for a particular employer.

Under a system of personal labour organization, both institutional *and* personal relationships developed between employer and employee. An employer had to become an effective leader not only to organize his labour force, but also to motivate it. He could not rely merely on violence, as did the slave owner, nor rely merely on the threat of dismissal, as did the industrial capitalist. The personal labour employer had to use positive incentives instead. He strove to win positive loyal service by using personal (in other words, superior — inferior) contacts, displaying a paternal interest in his employees, demonstrating superior energy, intelligence and fairness, and supporting appropriate celebrations, rewards and favours. Evidence that these types of relationships existed in the fur trade can be found in Hudson's Bay Company journals and correspondence. Similarly, evidence that these types of relationships existed in the cattle industry can also be found in the journals and correspondence of several cattle

[2] This system is opposite to the labour organization seen most often under industrial capitalism where the social overhead costs are the responsibility of the employees themselves, or at times the state.

station managers. The employee also adjusted his attitude by generally becoming agreeable and obedient and often gave up the opportunity to possibly earn more money elsewhere for a short period of time out of loyalty to the respected employer.

Personal labour organization was facilitated by a system of hierarchies and status that was explained and justified by paternalistic management techniques. Paternalistic management emphasized non-economic rewards as a means to keep wages low without lowering the labourers' morale. Paternalistic techniques were self-preserving as they met the economic and social needs of the labourers while continuing to inhibit upward mobility within the system. They were also flexible enough to ensure that industries relying on a fixed labour force, such as the fur trade and the cattle industry, could adjust to changing labour market conditions by varying the non-economic rewards while maintaining the previous social advantages offered in the industry. Finally, paternalism fostered a situation in which many of the new labourers entering the industry were actually children of old labourers. These children were already socialized to accept their previously defined roles in the industry and, therefore, the existing system rarely needed adjusting.

Over time, the hierarchies created under personal labour organization were increasingly divided along racial lines in the British colonies. Racism justified the work force allocations and the appropriation of Aboriginal lands and rights. Additionally, it augmented the paternalistic management techniques in socializing the various groups to accept the roles defined for them by the dominant class. These racial ideologies, developed in the economic systems of the colonies, were eventually translated into paternalistic state policies and government legislation. In Australia, paternalistic Aboriginal policy and legislation appeared as early as 1897 in Queensland and remains to this day, albeit in a somewhat altered form. Beginning in 1870, the Dominion of Canada assumed the role of the state in Rupertsland, but it looked to the HBC for guidance in the development of Aboriginal policies. Thus, paternalistic policies were perpetuated in Canada as they were in Australia. It becomes clear, then, that

paternalistic state policies and legislation find their roots in the economic systems of the colonies and not in a basic Eurocentric attitude.

In summary, personal labour organization can be developed as a suitable system to govern the relations of production if four basic conditions are met. First, there must be a scarcity of labourers. This scarcity can be created by a remoteness of location, a requirement of skilled labour, or a combination of the two. Second, the labourers must have the ability to hinder production by leaving the work force or producing an inferior quality of work. Third, the employer must enjoy a monopoly situation such that he can sustain a profit for his company even while continually maintaining the social overhead costs of his employees. Finally, the employer must use positive incentives to motivate his work force; he cannot simply rely upon the threat of dismissal or the use of violence as motivation. Personal labour organization can develop more quickly if skilled labour is required and employment is continuous (not seasonal); however, these are not necessary requirements. When personal labour organization has been adopted, the employer accepts the responsibility of covering the social overhead costs of his employees. Paternalistic management techniques are most often developed to maintain and justify the hierarchies created under personal labour organization and can be translated into state policies and legislation.

The Rupertsland fur trade and the northern Australian cattle industry both faced an economic environment in which these conditions were met. Furthermore, both industries chose to develop a system of personal labour organization in order to establish an effective mode of production. H. Clare Pentland's theory provides the most useful framework for which to understand the operations of both the fur trade and the cattle industry, and the changing modes of production over time within these two industries.

Some scholars approach the fur trade as a predominantly ceremonial activity used to reaffirm political and military alliances established between the various European powers and the Aboriginal peoples. While this approach may be applicable to the trade carried out in central Canada and the maritime provinces, it is not an accurate

description of the trade that was conducted in Rupertsland. Evidence in the extensive Hudson's Bay Company Archives suggests that the fur trade in Rupertsland was indeed an economic activity and it was approached as such by both the European and Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal participation in the Rupertsland trade was initially encouraged because the European traders had only limited knowledge of the land and its resources. At the same time, Aboriginal peoples agreed to participate in the trade as it was virtually their only means through which to obtain the European goods they desired: for example, guns, metalware, beads and tobacco. The economic conditions that the European and Aboriginal peoples faced in the trade were those conditions recognized by Pentland as necessary for the creation of personal labour organization.

The first economic condition recognized by Pentland, a scarcity of labourers, was created in two main ways. First, the trading posts in Rupertsland were generally isolated from other European settlements. Therefore, the Hudson's Bay Company (and other fur trade companies) did not have a reliable European labour pool from which to draw upon. Additionally, scarcity was created by the requirement of skilled labour necessary to conduct a viable trade. Aboriginal knowledge and experience concerning the territory and trapping made them valuable and, at least initially, necessary labourers.

Pentland's second economic condition, the ability for employees to hinder production, was also met in the fur trade. The Europeans' lack of knowledge and experience in the region made them sufficiently dependent on the continual participation of the Aboriginal peoples. If the terms of the trade were not sufficient to satisfy the needs of the Aboriginal trappers, the HBC soon discovered that the men would simply stop trapping commercially. As well, during times of intense competition, the trading companies endeavored to establish personal contacts and obligations in the hopes of securing a trapper's return to a specific post. By the 1860s, when Aboriginal peoples were well established as wage labourers for the HBC, they were very successful in hindering production by deserting or refusing to work at an efficient pace on the boat crews. The Hudson's Bay Company officers were well aware of the Aboriginal

labourers' ability to hinder production in the fur trade and tried to adjust their operations to avoid any unnecessary disruptions.

Pentland's third economic condition necessary for the creation of personal labour organization, employer monopoly, was also experienced in the fur trade. The Hudson's Bay Company Charter of 1670 gave the HBC proprietary ownership of Rupertsland. While this charter gave the Company some security, they faced competition from French traders initially and later several British companies based in Montreal. However, the high operating costs of the trade severely limited the number of trading companies that could successfully operate in Rupertsland. As such, the two dominant companies, the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, enjoyed oligopoly control of the Rupertsland fur trade. Oligopoly allowed the companies to keep their employees' wages low and their prices on manufactured goods high because direct competition, in other words, offering competitive wages and prices, would eventually erode the operations of both companies. Thus, these fur trade companies, operating under oligopoly control, were able to maintain a profit margin such that they could continually cover the social overhead costs of their employees.

Pentland's final economic condition, the employer's use of positive incentives to motivate the work force, was also found within the fur trade. European traders were dependent upon the participation of the Aboriginal trappers and, therefore, were not at liberty to simply dismiss or refuse to trade with unreliable trappers. Instead, they had to rely upon positive incentives and rewards. For example, they would cancel or reduce post debts to the most reliable trappers, hire only select Aboriginal and Métis trappers to perform wage labour, and present lavish gifts to the Aboriginal leaders who had large followings of trappers and brought in the best quality furs. These rewards and positive incentives were used to motivate the Aboriginal trappers and labourers and to encourage the behaviours most beneficial to the fur trade companies.

The need for skilled labour and continuous employment were also recognized by Pentland as economic conditions that encouraged personal labour organization to develop more quickly but were not necessary conditions. As was previously mentioned,

the fur trade companies required skilled labour in order to establish a viable trade. However, the fur trade involved predominantly seasonal, not continuous, employment opportunities for Aboriginal peoples. Regardless of this fact, the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company developed personal labour organization as the means to operate and maintain a profitable trade.

An integral part of personal labour organization is that the employer accepts the social overhead costs of his employees. This responsibility was administered in two main ways by the Hudson's Bay Company. One of the most obvious means by which the HBC covered the social overhead costs of their Aboriginal trappers was through the debt system. This system was a long established practice of providing, on credit, the equipment necessary to spend a season trapping before any furs had actually been delivered to the post. The HBC also provided relief during times of hardship and famine, not only to the trappers, but also to the families of the trappers. If the posts refused to provide relief, the trappers would no longer spend the season trapping; they would be forced to care for their families first. The Hudson's Bay Company recognized this possibility and, therefore, agreed to provide relief as a means of covering the social overhead costs of the Aboriginal trappers.

Paternalistic management techniques were an important aspect of the Rupertsland fur trade. Paternalism ensured the smooth operation of the system of personal labour organization, established rigid hierarchies and ensured both the social and physical separation of the officer and servant class.[3] The Chief Factor accepted this paternal role and eventually defined the employment hierarchies along racial lines. These racial designations were used to justify the inherent inequalities in the system. New employees, especially Aboriginal trappers and labourers, were often children of old

[3] Social separation was achieved by limited mobility within the employment hierarchies. Physical separation was achieved through measures such as trading through the "hole-in-the-wall." In other words, most Aboriginal trappers were not allowed to enter the company stores; they traded their furs through a window cut into the side of the wall. Arthur J. Ray and Donald Freeman, *Give Us Good Measure: An Economic Analysis of Relations Between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company Before 1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 58.

employees and, therefore, they were already socialized in the system and accepted their role with few adjustments necessary. Paternalistic management techniques were an important means of ensuring the smooth operation of personal labour organization within the fur trade.

By the 1850s, economic conditions in Rupertsland began to change. Settlement was expanding into the Red River area and the northern United States. Gradually, the American Fur Trade Company and other individual traders began to compete with the Hudson's Bay Company in this region. Eventually, the competition forced the HBC to restructure its fur trade operations. As it did so, employment and labour needs changed and personal labour organization was gradually eliminated. In 1870, the HBC transferred its proprietary ownership of Rupertsland to the Dominion of Canada and a new era of settling the west began. When the Canadian government accepted Rupertsland into the Dominion, it also accepted certain responsibilities, including the welfare of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the region. It looked to the HBC for guidance concerning Aboriginal welfare and, as such, the paternalistic attitudes established under personal labour organization were perpetuated in Canadian state policy and legislation.[4] Even though personal labour organization was no longer dominant in Rupertsland industries, the paternalistic management techniques that developed in the fur trade continued to influence the structure of society in western Canada.

The cattle industry is one of Australia's most successful export industries and it owes much of its success to Aboriginal labour. The industry did not, however, utilize Aboriginal labour from the very beginning. Historical animosities and fierce Aboriginal resistance to Anglo-Australian encroachment encouraged most station managers to rely upon Anglo-Australian labour sources. However, as the pastoralists continued to expand into the more remote northern regions, the scarcity of Anglo-Australian labour resources increased as other expanding industries became more attractive to the Anglo-Australian men. Thus, by the early 1870s, Aboriginal labour was well established in the

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[4] Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 199-221.

northern cattle industry and economic interdependencies were created. In addition to the scarcity of other Anglo-Australian labour resources, many of the Aboriginal peoples' skills and knowledge translated easily into the work required in the cattle industry. As such, pastoralists eventually began to seek out Aboriginal labourers in order to tap these skills. Aboriginal peoples entered the industry for several reasons, including the lack of opportunity in other industries and the threat of violence. Some Aboriginal peoples, especially the fully-initiated men, began seeking employment as a means to maintain access to traditional lands and sacred sites as the Anglo-Australian pastoralists relentlessly appropriated their land.

The economic conditions faced by the pastoralists in northern Australia were those identified by H. Clare Pentland as necessary to the development of personal labour organization. The first economic condition, a scarcity of labourers, was created in two important ways. First, the Northern Territory and Queensland were remote. Anglo-Australian settlements were sparsely populated and often situated at great distances from the cattle stations. As a result, reliable Anglo-Australian labourers were often unwilling to relocate to remote stations. This situation worsened when, first, a series of gold rushes and, then, a growing mining industry provided alternative job opportunities for Anglo-Australians. A scarcity of labourers was also created by the station manager's reliance on skilled labour. Station workers needed an extensive knowledge of cattle and the northern geography for the station to profit.

Pentland's second condition, the ability of labourers to hinder production, was experienced in the cattle industry as well. The Aboriginal labourers performed some of the most important tasks on the stations, for example, mustering, droving and tracking lost cattle. Therefore, they could easily disrupt production by leaving or working at an inferior quality. Early on, many station managers discovered how serious a problem this situation could create when some of their Aboriginal labourers simply left, even during the busiest times, to attend family gatherings or religious activities. To compensate, many managers began hiring on a seasonal basis to stress to the Aboriginal men that they were needed on the station at very specific times. It is important to note, however,

that even though the Aboriginal labourers were hired seasonally, their social overhead costs were covered by the station managers throughout the year.

Cattle station managers in northern Australia did not enjoy an oligopoly in the same sense as did the Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company in Canada; however, they were able to generate enough profits to sustain their employees' social overhead costs for two main reasons. First, the cattle industry was virtually the only employment option for Aboriginal people in the northern interior. Therefore, the managers were able to keep wages low for Aboriginal labourers. Second, northern Australia is predominantly desert, which required pastoral stations to be large enough to find suitable grazing areas and watering holes. As such, if an Aboriginal person wanted to maintain access to a specific site or tract of land, he or she often had only one station from which to seek employment. Much like in the fur trade, the high operating costs of the cattle stations limited the number of stations that could operate successfully. As such, an oligopoly was created in the industry in northern Australia in the sense that each station operated as a trade centre for an extensive resource activity, much like the fur trading posts in Rupertsland. This oligopoly allowed the individual cattle stations to continually carry the social overhead costs of their employees.

Pentland's fourth condition, the use of positive incentives to motivate the workforce, was also maintained in the northern Australian cattle industry. The station managers were too dependent on Aboriginal labour to use the threat of dismissal as motivation. As a result, managers relied on a reward system. The most reliable workers were promoted or given the most desirable jobs. Additionally, these workers were often employed at the head station, given more responsibility and supplied more frequently with clothes, blankets, saddles and other such equipment. Violence was also used on some stations as a means to discourage certain behaviours. However, most station managers agreed that violence was not as effective for motivating the workforce as was assuming a strict paternal role over their Aboriginal employees. Violence was also important as a physical demonstration of Anglo-Australian superiority even though they remained dependent on the Aboriginal peoples.

Finally, one of the two conditions that Pentland argued would encourage personal labour organization to develop more quickly was met in the cattle industry. The station managers required skilled labour to run an efficient and profitable outfit. However, as with the fur trade, the cattle industry required seasonal labour. Regardless, the cattle station managers in northern Australia developed personal labour organization as the means through which to maintain a viable operation.

As a result of using personal labour organization, the cattle station managers agreed to assume the responsibility of carrying the social overhead costs of their Aboriginal employees. One way in which the managers assumed these social overhead costs was through the supply of rations, clothing, shelter and other tools necessary to complete the various tasks on the stations. Allowing Aboriginal camps to be established and maintained on the station was even more important in accomplishing this responsibility. These camps housed the extended families of the station employees, even though many of these residents did not actively participate in the daily operation of the station. Many managers complained bitterly about these camps, but most did nothing to evict the residents, at least initially. Most managers understood that if they removed the Aboriginal camps from their properties, many of the Aboriginal employees would have been forced to leave the station and search for other work that would allow them to fulfill all of their kinship obligations and provide for their families' well-being.

As in the Rupertsland fur trade, paternalism and rigid hierarchies ensured the smooth operation of personal labour organization in the cattle industry in northern Australia. Both social and physical separation were strictly maintained on the stations, particularly at the head station. The homestead, where the station manager lived, was often enclosed by a fence and carefully planted trees. Aboriginal employees were not allowed on to the homestead unless they had a specific task to accomplish. As was mentioned previously, violence was also used on some stations as a physical demonstration of Anglo-Australian authority in a region where the pastoralists remained dependent on the Aboriginal people from whom they had appropriated the land. Employment hierarchies were clearly defined along racial lines. As well, new

employees were often children of old employees and many had been raised on station property. Therefore, these young men and women were already socialized to accept their roles in the cattle industry and few adjustments ever had to be made to the existing system.

As early as 1897, the Queensland state government began regulating Aboriginal employment. This legislation became the model for much of the legislation enacted in other Australian states. Paternalistic attitudes developed in the cattle industry, as well as other industries, influenced the tone and content of the various government legislation, which encompassed protectionist attitudes and goals and used paternalistic language and sentiments. As government and missionary officials began to establish Aboriginal welfare funds and reservations, cattle station managers in northern Australia were able to move the Aboriginal camps off of their station property without interfering with the social obligations of their Aboriginal employees. In other words, by the mid-1950s, the government and missionary officials had begun to assume some of the social overhead costs of Aboriginal labourers, allowing station managers to be less dependent on personal labour organization.[5]

Finally, by the 1970s, the Australian government was able to legislate and enforce equal pay for Aboriginal workers.[6] Once equal pay was achieved, however, the Aboriginal workers entered a competitive labour market and, as H. Clare Pentland argued, this condition allowed personal labour relationships to breakdown. As the Aboriginal people entered the competitive labour market, the responsibility to carry their social overhead costs passed from the station managers to the government. At the same time, technology was changing in the cattle industry such that a large number of Aboriginal station workers was no longer necessary. As personal labour organization

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[5] For a detailed discussion of legislation from the Commonwealth, Northern Territory and Queensland governments, see C.D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society: Aboriginal Policy and Practice — Volume I* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970), Chapter 13; and, C.D. Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines: Aboriginal Policy and Practice — Volume III* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971), Chapter 11.

[6] Dawn May, *Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1994), 164-8.

declined in northern Australia, the paternalistic attitudes that developed on the cattle stations were continued in the Australian government's policy and legislation on Aboriginal issues.

Personal labour organization was an important catalyst in the creation and expression of a Métis identity in Red River. The personal relationships that developed under personal labour organization in the fur trade and the cattle industry allowed for a cohesiveness and inter-connectedness to develop between the Aboriginal labourers and their employers which emphasized the interdependencies that were inherent in the industries. This cohesiveness was not experienced in other industries that used impersonal relations of production.[7] This cohesiveness was not even experienced in the fur trade outside of Rupertsland where the economic system of the fur trade differed considerably.[8] Even though personal labour organization was important to the eventual creation and expression of a Métis identity, it was clearly not the only catalyst as the mixed descent population in northern Australian did not develop and express a unique identity. As such, it is necessary to examine the external influences that either encouraged or prohibited the expression of a mixed descent identity.

There are four main, inter-related external influences that impacted on the mixed descent populations in Rupertsland and northern Australia: the needs of employers in regards to land tenure; the opportunities available to the people of mixed descent; the education made available to Aboriginal people; and the time depth of contact in the industries. Even though the economic and labour relations experienced by the Aboriginal peoples in the cattle industry were very similar to those experienced by the Aboriginal peoples in the fur trade, the different natures of the two economic activities created the need for two different approaches to land tenure to be assumed by the British

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[7] See, for example, the experiences of Aboriginal labourers in Canada's sugar beet industry. Ronald F. Laliberte, "The Canadian State and Native Migrant Labour in Southern Alberta's Sugar Beet Industry" (MA Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1994).

[8] The one possible exception might have been in the Great Lakes region where the mixed descent population was beginning to develop a unique identity, but lost their status and position in the fur trade when agricultural endeavours assumed importance. Jacqueline Peterson, "Many roads,".

employers. In Rupertsland, the fur trade was concerned with the extraction of a natural resource on an exchange basis, albeit unequal, with the Aboriginal peoples. In other words, the mercantilist fur traders were concerned only with the *exchange* of a commodity and were, therefore, not concerned if the labourers (in this case, the Aboriginal peoples) maintained control of a means of production (in this case, access to a land base).[9] As such, establishing and enforcing land ownership was not an initial concern of the fur trading companies. The Hudson's Bay Company Charter of 1670 provided a legal proprietorship of Rupertsland to the Company; however, the HBC did only as little as was necessary to enforce this proprietorship and was willing to allow the Aboriginal peoples to remain in at least partial control of the land base and, as such, in control of a means of production.[10]

The situation in Australia varied significantly. The pastoralists, influenced by the ideals of industrial capitalism, were concerned with the *production* of a commodity and, therefore, needed complete control of the means of production in order to ensure that labour-power would exist as a commodity in northern Australia.[11] As such, it was important for the pastoralists to enforce their proprietorship and to control the movement of Aboriginal peoples across their land from the initial establishment of the industry in the north, even though the economic conditions were such that personal labour organization had to be established in order for a profitable industry to be maintained. This concern of the pastoralists played an important role in hindering the development of a distinct mixed descent identity as it reinforced the colour line and allowed racial segregation and violence to become an important aspect of the employment hierarchies and the social life of the cattle stations, much more so than in the fur trade prior to 1821.[12]

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[9] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. I, ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 271-4.
[10] Edith I. Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company: Work, Discipline, and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770-1879* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), 23-4.
[11] Marx, *Capital*, 271-4.
[12] May, *Aboriginal Labour*, 155-8.

The requirement to be in absolute control of the means of production forced the Australian pastoralists to colonize the northern lands as efficiently as possible. In order to justify the appropriation of Aboriginal lands in their own minds, the Anglo-Australian people began to consider the Aboriginal peoples as intrinsically inferior to themselves.[13] These racist attitudes also aided in the creation of an Aboriginal labouring class that was not protected from exploitation to the same degree as other Anglo-Australian labouring classes. While the fur traders also considered the Aboriginal peoples in Rupertsland to be of an inferior class, the traders were not initially concerned with colonization and, as such, their attitudes towards the inferiority of Aboriginal people were not as severe as those in northern Australia.

The issue of land ownership also had an important influence on the role of Aboriginal women in the industries. In Rupertsland, the Hudson's Bay Company did not strictly enforce their proprietorship over the land and, therefore, had to develop another method for initiating trade with the Aboriginal peoples. This method was developed in several ways, including the establishment of political and social connections between a post and a band when the officer of the post took an influential woman of the band as his wife. This political influence encouraged the development of closer, familial relationships in Rupertsland than those that developed in northern Australia and, at least partially, encouraged the development of a mixed descent identity in Rupertsland. Once the Australian pastoralists were able to establish and enforce land ownership in the north, the restricted movement over the land that the Aboriginal peoples now faced was an important influence in their willingness to participate in the cattle industry. In order to maintain access to their traditional lands, the Aboriginal peoples needed to seek employment on cattle stations. As such, even though the Aboriginal women in Australia were important to the cattle industry because of their traditional skills and knowledge, they did not have the political influence that the Aboriginal women in Rupertsland were able to establish. In essence, there was little

[13] Myrna Tonkinson, "Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude? Black Women and White Women on the Australian Frontier," *Aboriginal History* vol. 12, no. 1 (1988), 34.

incentive for a pastoralist to risk the disfavour of the larger Anglo-Australian society by taking an Aboriginal woman as a wife, especially considering he could use her economic and sexual services by simply employing her on the station.

In other words, in situations where the *production* of commodities and, as a result, land ownership, were important influences, such as in the northern Australian cattle industry, racial inequality became an important justification for the appropriation of Aboriginal lands and the exploitation of Aboriginal labourers. As such, people of mixed descent in these situations were an 'affront to civilization' and an 'embarrassment' as their very existence was physical proof of intimate relationships between European men and Aboriginal women. However, in situations where the *exchange* of commodities was an important influence and, as a result, land ownership was not an important influence, such as in the Rupertsland fur trade, Aboriginal people had more of an opportunity to gain status and prestige (although certainly not equal to that of the Europeans) as they were not seen as a hindrance to European land ownership. Therefore, in these situations, people of mixed descent would be recognized as more valuable to the industry than people of full Aboriginal descent. As a result, mixed descent people in Australia, while at times recognized as distinct from the Aboriginal population by Anglo-Australian station workers, relied on physical appearance as one of the most important factors in determining their future economic opportunities. On the other hand, mixed descent people in Rupertsland, while also recognized as distinct from the Aboriginal population by European fur traders, relied on their fathers' influence as one of the most important factors in determining their future economic opportunities until they became a cohesive group with their own political voice.

The opportunities for people of mixed descent in the industries was another important external influence that either encouraged or prohibited the expression of a unique identity. In the Rupertsland fur trade, the men of mixed descent were often considered more desirable for employment than men of full Aboriginal descent, at least prior to 1821. Additionally, women of mixed descent were considered the most desirable wives prior to 1821. As a result, some members of the mixed descent

population were able to accumulate capital, prestige and status in Rupertsland society. It was these men who eventually resisted the unilateral actions of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian government. In Australia, however, the men and women of mixed descent did not have similar opportunities for advancement in the cattle industry. In other words, due to the racist attitudes of the dominant Australian society, people of mixed descent were generally denied the opportunity to accumulate capital, prestige and status in Australia. As such, there was limited opportunity for the people of mixed descent in northern Australia to express a unique identity.

The education provided to the Aboriginal peoples in Rupertsland and northern Australia was another external influence that either encouraged or prohibited the expression of a unique identity. As was discussed previously, Pentland argued that changes in labour relations can be observed in periods of labour militancy in capitalist systems. He proposed that as long as there exists a gap between the education of the employers and the employees, and as long as the employers can demonstrate a sophistication well above their employees, paternalistic management techniques are accepted and labour movements are virtually unheard of. The rise in labour militancy and the eventual creation of unions during the early twentieth century was a direct result of the increase in knowledge and skills of the employees.[14] The increase of knowledge and skills among the Aboriginal work force occurred differently in Rupertsland and northern Australia.

In Rupertsland, the Aboriginal people who were most often educated were those men of mixed descent who had the most influential fathers. It was these men who first began to close the gap between employer and employee. Initially, these men were also able to advance within the fur trade companies and begin to accumulate capital, prestige and status. However, during the three decades following the merger of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company in 1821, the potentials for advancement within the Company significantly declined for the men of mixed descent, even though

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[14] H. Clare Pentland, "The Canadian Industrial Relations System: Some Formative Factors," *Labour/ Le Travailleur* (1979), 22.

they continued to advance their level of knowledge and skills. This situation, combined with the Company's increasing lack of acknowledgment of these men, led to the establishment of a free trade movement and eventually led to the provisional government of Red River in 1869. Some of the men involved in these disputes found popular support for their actions by arguing that they were fighting for their rights as a distinct people — the Métis. Throughout this time period, from the late seventeenth century through to the late nineteenth century, the Aboriginal people of full descent received little, if any, formal western education. Such was not the case in northern Australia, where all Aboriginal people received a formal education after they were removed to government or mission settlements.

The Aboriginal people who participated in the northern Australian cattle industry were rarely, if ever, educated by the station managers. As far as the managers were concerned, the Aboriginal people were more useful employees if they maintained the traditional Aboriginal knowledge and skills that were crucial to the successful operation of the industry. While education could potentially increase the efficiency of the Aboriginal workers, most pastoralists argued that education was 'unsettling for the future work force' as educated Aboriginal workers made more demands concerning their employment conditions.[15] However, when Aboriginal people were relocated to government and mission settlements, the children began to receive a basic western education. At this point, the knowledge gap between employer and employee slowly began to close. However, in Australia, unlike in Rupertsland, education was not a privilege bestowed on the mixed descent sons of influential Company employees; education was provided to all Aboriginal children who were relocated to government or missionary settlements. Perhaps even more importantly, the positive experiences of the Aboriginal people during World War II were extended to all Aboriginal people, not just those of mixed descent. As such, when the Gurindji people walked off the Wave Hill

[15] C.D. Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines: Aboriginal Policy and Practice – Volume III* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971), 268.

Station in 1966, they found popular support by arguing that they were fighting for their rights as Aboriginal people, not simply people of mixed descent.

Finally, the different time depths of contact in Rupertsland and northern Australia also had a significant impact on the mixed descent populations of these countries. The Hudson's Bay Company was the only governing body in Rupertsland for nearly two centuries. While the HBC had some ability to enforce various rules and regulations on its employees, it proved largely ineffectual in discouraging inter-racial relationships between the European employees and the Aboriginal women; eventually, the Company simply stopped trying. As a result, the mixed descent population in Rupertsland grew relatively unimpeded by any formal regulations passed by the HBC's Board of Directors. During nearly two centuries of experience, the mixed descent population in Rupertsland had the opportunity to develop an economic niche for themselves as a semi-Europeanized labour force and, eventually, the opportunity to develop an identity that was distinct from both the Aboriginal and the European populations living in Rupertsland.

In northern Australia, however, the time depth of contact was brief in comparison. While initially the pastoralists were able to create their own frontier 'regulations,' within almost a decade after the Aboriginal people were finally established in the industry the Australian government began to formally legislate Aboriginal affairs in the northern territories. By 1897, the government was dictating labour relationships between the Anglo-Australian pastoralists and the Aboriginal stockworkers, as well as restricting the rights and freedoms of Aboriginal people in general. The Australian government was more successful in its attempts to regulate against inter-racial relationships than was the HBC Board of Directors. While a mixed descent population did emerge in northern Australia, it was much smaller than the mixed descent population in Rupertsland. The smaller size of the population in northern Australia interfered with the development of a unique mixed descent identity.

As the Australian government increasingly accepted the responsibility of Aboriginal welfare, the pastoralists were able to reduce their reliance on Aboriginal

labourers long before the mixed descent population had the opportunity to establish itself as a semi-Europeanized labour force in northern Australia as did its counterpart in Rupertsland. Stated simply, the period of time in which Aboriginal labour was crucial to the northern Australian cattle industry was too brief for the development of a distinct identity amongst the mixed descent population in Australia.

The economic and labour relations in the Rupertsland fur trade and the northern Australian cattle industry were very similar. Both industries faced severe labour shortages and operated in regions where there were limited employment opportunities for Aboriginal labourers. As such, both industries utilized personal labour organization as a means to operate efficient, profitable companies. As personal labour organization began to decline in both industries, the Aboriginal employees began to fight for an improvement in their economic situation. However, it was only in Rupertsland that this struggle occurred among the economic elite and, as a result, assumed nationalistic tones that formally expressed and solidified a unique Métis identity in Canada.

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the Aboriginal people of northern Australia were well established as labourers in the cattle industry. The pastoralists, who were concerned with the production of a commodity, maintained strict control over the land base. As such, the Aboriginal labourers rarely moved out of the subordinate class. Even the people of mixed descent, who were an embarrassing reminder of illicit sexual relationships between Anglo-Australian men and Aboriginal women, were essentially blocked from establishing any real status or prestige within the industry. However, as the personal labour organization began to decline in northern Australia and as the Aboriginal people (both those of full and mixed descent) began to be educated and began to experience better working conditions during World War II, the Aboriginal labourers became increasingly dissatisfied with their economic position. The Gurindji people of the Wave Hill Station were the first employees to stage an extensive strike. They were trying to achieve improved working conditions plus the opportunity to regain control of their traditional lands. As such, they used a common Aboriginal identity to gain popular support for their struggles.

The fur trade in Rupertsland made extensive use of Aboriginal labour from its inception. The fur traders, who were concerned with the exchange of commodities, did not concern themselves with maintaining strict control over the land base. As such, Aboriginal women assumed important political roles as marriages between fur traders and influential women often established and cemented important ties between trading posts and Aboriginal bands. As the mixed descent population in Rupertsland began to grow, the children of influential traders were able to receive an education and gain considerable status and prestige within the trading companies. However, after the 1821 merger, when personal labour organization in the fur trade began to decline, the status and prestige of some of the mixed descent population was threatened. Eventually, the mixed descent elite of Rupertsland were able to use the confusion surrounding the transfer of Rupertsland from the HBC to the Dominion of Canada in an attempt to shift the balance of power from central Canada to Red River. Even though the Red River resistance of 1869 to 1870 did not achieve lasting economic benefits for the mixed descent population of Rupertsland, the nationalistic themes used by the Métis and country-born elite during the resistance allowed for the formal expression and recognition of a unique group of people — the Métis — in Canada.

In summary, even though the economic and labour relations in Rupertsland and northern Australia were an important catalyst to the development and expression of a unique mixed descent identity, it was the external influences in these two industries — in particular, the issue of the control of the land, the economic opportunities of the mixed descent people, the provision of education to Aboriginal peoples, and the time depth of contact — that encouraged the expression of a unique Métis identity in Rupertsland and not in northern Australia.

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